

**POLITICS AND THE EXPOSITORY SERMON: ADDRESSING ISSUES
WHILE PREACHING BIBLICALLY AND ETHICALLY**

A THESIS

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BY

DENNIS K. ANDREWS

GODDARD LIBRARY
Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary
130 Essex Street
South Hamilton, MA 01982-2361

CONTENTS

Abstract.....	v
Chapter One – Introduction.....	1
The Purpose of the Study.....	3
The Importance of the Study.....	4
The Broader Significance of the Study.....	7
Chapter Two – Theologies and Exegesis.....	9
Introduction.....	9
Preaching Theologies.....	10
Churches and Political Theologies.....	16
Exegesis.....	27
Conclusion.....	49
Chapter Three – Preaching, Literary, and Audience Considerations.....	51
Introduction.....	51
Constructing the Political Sermon.....	52
Secular and Christian Literature.....	61
Analyzing the Contemporary Audience.....	74
Conclusion.....	87
Chapter Four – Lesson Plan.....	88
Introduction.....	88
Session 1 Introduction to Political Preaching.....	89
Session 2 The Theological and Exegetical Foundations.....	91

Session 3 Constructing the Political Sermon.....	95
Chapter Five – Report of Teaching Session.....	104
Introduction.....	104
Group Setting.....	104
Summary of Participant’s Feedback.....	106
The Instructor’s Evaluation.....	109
Suggestions for Improvements.....	110
Conclusion.....	112
Appendix	
Appendix A – Matthew 5: 13 – 16 Worksheet.....	113
Appendix B – Matthew 22: 15 – 22 Worksheet.....	114
Appendix C – Romans 13: 1 – 6 Worksheet.....	115
Appendix D – Three Approaches to Preaching Politics.....	116
Appendix E – The Preacher and the IRS.....	117
Appendix F – Fields of Observation.....	118
Appendix G – Questions for Exegeting the Congregation.....	119
Appendix H – Life Situation Grid.....	120
Appendix I – Review of <i>Christ and Culture</i>	121
Appendix J – Feedback Survey.....	130
Bibliography.....	131
Vita.....	138

ABSTRACT

This thesis-project is designed to determine how ministers can address within their sermons civil and political issues while remaining biblical and ethical in their delivery. Because of the tension that exists between religion and government preachers find it necessary to comment on political issues which affect their congregants. These issues can include things like the actions of a local school board, the enactment of federal laws and, world and international events.

This thesis realizes that ministers have great latitude in deciding upon the content of their sermons. Legislative and judicial prohibitions on sermon content are relatively minimal in the United States. However, to preach political sermons in a way that glorifies God and edifies the believer demands prayerful and thoughtful preparation. This project emphasizes that a proper homiletical theology, a solid scriptural foundation, a commitment to Big Idea Preaching, and a thorough exegesis of the local congregation and the larger culture are the ingredients for preaching political sermons biblically and ethically.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

As one traces the history of the Christian Church there has always been tension between religion and a culture's political climate. This tension will continue into the future. No matter the attempts to accommodate each other there inevitably comes a point where the relationship between religion and a country's political structure is strained. Within such a climate, Christian pastors in America may find themselves compelled to address issues which are inherently within the political arena. This may include anything from a local school board's actions to a case being heard by the United States Supreme Court. Many pastors hold to the notion that the pulpit is the ready-made location where they can address the political circumstances of the day. Yet, one must exercise caution. Julissa McKinnon (2002) aptly writes, "taking politics to the pulpit is a lot like gambling: risky, unpredictable and controversial" (para. 1). Ministers who have attempted such statements within their sermons know the truth of McKinnon's words. Even the most well-intentioned ministers can utter remarks which cause congregants to construct mental and emotional barriers against meaningful communication.

As a minister crafts his or her sermon to address such issues a danger that must be acknowledged and avoided is minimizing the actual message of a biblical text in order to have the sermon make a political statement. Pastors who preach expository sermons should never accept this as a legitimate approach. For those who seek to stay true to this method of preaching, the guiding question is not whether preachers can speak from the pulpit about issues of politics. Indeed, they can and must make such statements from time

to time. Instead, the vital question is do the preacher's political comments rest upon a solid biblical foundation? It may be the preacher's desire to address political issues that are shaping his or her city, nation and world. However, it is of the utmost importance that the preacher neither stretches the biblical text to make statements which the Bible does not make nor apply the text to civil and political issues which are not addressed by it.

This project focuses upon the preacher who chooses to incorporate within a sermon comments about the issues affecting local, national, and global life. It is designed to give preachers an understanding of 1) the historical background of political preaching in the Christian church, 2) the biblical and theological boundaries for preaching sermons which contain secular, political content and 3) how expository preaching can give this type of sermon both biblical and theological integrity.

For this research project political material within a sermon is defined as content which speaks or, makes statements, directly to the secular, political issues of the present day. In the past the church has witnessed preachers whose sermons regarding politics and government were issue driven. There have even been those who strongly implied which candidate to choose or which political party is "Christian". In the 2008 Presidential campaign ministers such as John Hagee, Rod Parsley and Jeremiah Wright caught the attention of the national media because of remarks made from their pulpits. These remarks caused both Presidential candidates, John McCain and Barak Obama, to distance themselves from those ministries and disavow those statements.

Mixing politics and preaching is not confined to the conservative side of the Church. Many pastors considered to be liberal in theology are all too ready to weigh-in on political issues. Ronald D. Sisk (2008) notes this produces strange contradictions.

I end up feeling that whenever conservatives have been trying to affect national policy, liberal preachers have argued that the church should stay out of politics, and whenever the liberals have been trying to change national policy, conservative preachers have argued that the church should stay out of politics. (p. 85)

It is accurate to say that both sides of the political aisle use the pulpit in an attempt to affect political change or to preserve the political status-quo.

Therefore, this research project places emphasis on the biblical text as the driving force behind the sermon's content. It is homiletical abuse of the first order to make political statements in a sermon that leave parishioners wondering how the preacher derives those comments from his or her chosen text. Many preachers would do well to heed the warning offered by Adam Hamilton (2008), in his book *Seeing Grey in a World of Black and White*.

There are many ways we might misuse God's name but among these is making statements about God that God himself would reject. I believe the terrorist who invoke God's name before killing innocent people is one clear example. But so, too, are the many things pastors and preachers say about God, with utter confidence, but which God might find the antithesis of his heart and character. (p. 16)

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This project is designed as a course for students of preaching. It can be adapted and expanded for academic scholarship or used as a professional development tool. First,

this project is for the seminary student who has completed both the Introduction to Homiletics and Expository Preaching courses. The person who chooses this course will have already acquired the knowledge and understanding of Biblical Preaching. These students understand the “Big Idea” concept as taught by Doctor Haddon Robinson and that the sermon content is to support that idea. In this course the student will be challenged to approach political structure from a deeper understanding of what statements, claims, and comments can be legitimately made.

Second, this project is for the pastor in the local parish who may feel morally and ethically obligated to speak from the pulpit concerning issues that are, at their roots, political. While the pastor may not possess the knowledge of “Big Idea” preaching, this project is easily adaptable to the homiletical training of the pastor. The teaching material in this project will give any pastor a refined understanding of what can be said about political issues without taking unjustified biblical or homiletical liberties.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

There are five reasons a study such as this one is important. First, Expository preaching is still the dominant approach for preaching biblical truth. Every Sunday morning the preachers are given the awesome privilege and responsibility of standing before the congregation and expounding upon what they have received from the Holy Scriptures after significant study and prayer. Expository preaching is the method most often chosen to formulate and deliver biblical truth.

We who are preachers are charged with listening very carefully for what God would say to his people.... In order to hear this word we must study carefully

what God has already said through Scriptures. We are the interpreters, and our parishioners come not to hear what we know about any given topic, but to have us use our skills and training to interpret and translate what God would say to them, in a way that they can understand and apply to their lives. (Hamilton, 2008, p. 13)

Second, there is a shift among Americans concerning mixing religion and politics.

The Annual Religion and Public Life Survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (2008) discovered “a narrow majority (52%) of the public saying that churches and other houses of worship should keep out of political matters and not express their views on day-to-day social and political matters” (Overview section, para. 1). This finding does not mean that a minister cannot include comments about politics in his or her sermons. It does mean that in order to minimize resistance to the sermon the minister must be sure of its biblical context and truth.

Third, Christians must know how to think biblically about political issues. As has been stated, religion and politics will always be in tension with each other. Some Christians struggle with positions their political parties take or issues the parties endorse. They wonder what the Bible says about such issues. In the *Great American Sermon Survey* when congregants who participated in the survey were asked what was the one message they wish they could get across to all preachers in the United States “Thirty –six percent advise preachers regarding their content; most of all, they want a relevant message with clear ties to scripture” (Carrell, 2000, p. 96). Along these same lines Lovejoy (2005) says,

It would be best to think, *I’m not really going to preach on an issue, I’m going to preach on the Bible as it relates to this issue.* If a congregation perceives your

message is rooted in the Bible, they are more willing to give you a hearing. But if the sermon resembles the editorial page with the Bible tacked on, they may treat it as only your opinion. (p. 663)

So addressing political issues during the sermon is acceptable as long as the people know the sermon has a biblical foundation. The Expository preacher who is sure of his historical, theological and homiletical approach can achieve this because the preacher knows what the selected Bible passage actually allows him to say in order to help listeners.

Fourth, many political issues are also moral issues. In everyday life people must make decisions between right and wrong. Likewise, political institutions should govern not simply on the basis of legality but also from a moral basis. At this point a preacher can serve his or her congregation best by outlining the moral foundations of society and politics.

Most fundamentally, religious beliefs provide a basis for morality. Just as religious teaching is helpful for discerning right from wrong in one's everyday life, so religion can offer a framework for evaluating a legislative proposal, comparing candidates for office, or assessing the latest actions of the local school board. Even those who do not identify with a particular religion still uphold some form of moral code that, much like an explicitly religious worldview, will affect their evaluations of political questions. (Black, 2008, p. 19)

Expository preaching is the mode whereby the preacher presents biblical principles and guidance to congregations regarding how they as Christians should think and respond to moral issues.

Five, preachers must be balanced in their preaching content. Not every sermon should make political statements. It is better received if the pastor is sparing with his or her political comments. Pastors who preach an inordinate amount of sermons addressing secular, political issues inevitably neglect important opportunities to preach on the weighty matter of Christianity. And, in some cases, preaching an inordinate amount of political sermons leads the congregation to embark on political activism which replaces the church's mandate to evangelize the lost. Preachers whose sermons are preoccupied with political issues communicates to their audiences that activities done in the political arena are an acceptable substitute for fulfilling the Great Commission. It communicates that holding a sign on the street corner is the same as witnessing for Christ. Black (2008) states it well when she says, "If Christians lose their confidence in God's sovereign control and place their confidence in politics as the path to cultural restoration, they make government into an idol" (p. 22).

THE BROADER SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

"Throughout the history of the republic preachers have sought to influence local, state, and national policy from their pulpit" (Sisk, 2008 p. 84). While this is certainly true a preacher does not have *carte blanche* to use the biblical text or the preaching event in a careless manner in order to get his or her political point across to their congregations. Ultimately, the preacher must be sure theologically and biblically what is acceptable when it comes to preaching sermons with political content or damage may result from overindulgence or biblical and homiletical abuse.

The preacher, first and foremost, is called to preach Christ and the marvelous transformation he makes in the lives of those who will believe and receive Him as Savior and live for Him as their Lord. This project is designed to remind students and pastors that while it may be acceptable to address secular political issues it can only be done in a way that makes Christ all the more appealing and desirable to those who hear the message. When a preacher is sure of the theological boundaries and the central idea of the text this will be accomplished.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGIES AND EXEGESIS

INTRODUCTION

Pulpit ethics do not prohibit pastors from addressing political issues during a sermon. This means it is imperative that each minister exercise his or her spiritual and pastoral judgment to determine the appropriateness of all sermon content. Therefore, this paper is not concerned with eliminating all references to civil government or politics within a sermon. Instead, the concern of this paper is to explore the most effective avenues for delivering political material and making political statements within the sermon.

For preaching to be ethical and Christian it must begin with the biblical foundations which underlie all sermon content and its delivery. Sidney Greidanus (1988) declares, "Since the Bible is the normative source of revelation for contemporary preachers, they must bind themselves to the Scriptures if they would preach the word of God. In other words, they must preach biblically" (p. 9). Beginning at this point gives the preacher confidence and a solid footing to either speak about politics or to refrain from making statements which address civil matters. Again Greidanus (1988) notes,

Preachers today do not receive their messages directly from God the way the prophets did. Nor can preachers today claim with the apostles that they were 'eyewitnesses' (2 Pet 1: 16; cf. Luke 1:2). And yet, provided their sermons are biblical preachers today may also claim to bring the word of God. (p. 7)

In the latter part of this chapter specific biblical passages which address the civil/church relationship will be surveyed. First, however, the important matter of theology will be discussed.

Preaching politics ethically and effectively begins with sound theology. Two types of theology inform this study of political preaching. First, there is the minister's own homiletical theology. Second, there is the political theology of the minister's particular tradition, denomination, or faith group. At times, tension can exist between these two perspectives. The goal of the minister is to resolve the tension between the two theologies. When this is accomplished the preacher has clarity as to the extent to which politics and government can and should be address and these theologies provide the guiding principles from which the minister prepares and delivers the sermon.

PREACHING THEOLOGIES

Why is a theology of preaching important? For ministers who see the task of preaching as a sacred obligation it is never a last consideration. Perhaps John Stott (1982) provides the best answer to why a theology of preaching is of ultimate importance to a minister. He says, "Techniques can only make us orators; if we want to be preachers, theology is what is needed" (p.92). Preaching without giving due consideration to biblical theology is tantamount to navigating an ocean without a compass. We will be lost, having no idea where we have been or where we are going or how to get to where we are suppose to be.

There is no shortage of preaching theologies today. Many of the homiletic textbooks reviewed in preparation for this thesis-project revolved around the idea that

God spoke and that he still speaks. Rooted in the Evangelical tradition, all of them are Christological and Trinitarian seeing the entire God-head's involvement within the preaching event. The scholars may use their own terms and language but all seem to couch their preaching theologies in this design. John S. McClure (2007) in *Preaching Words: 144 Key Terms in Homiletics* presents four theologies of preaching. According to McClure most homileticians and preachers operate roughly within one of these theological frames of reference, or in some combination of them (p. 139). All of them have import for how a minister addresses civil concerns from the pulpit.

Existential Theology

An existential theology of preaching always has as its starting point human existence. It views humanity as facing a predicament or a crisis in which fear, anxiety, and guilt are manifested. Because of this dilemma people are faced with the inescapable feeling that life is meaningless, unfulfilling, and ruled by despair and death. It is into such an existence preachers must speak "a Word of redemption and meaning from outside this situation that will answer their deepest questions about life and death" (McClure, 2007, p. 138).

Theologian Paul Tillich was a leading proponent of this model for preaching. His *Theology of Culture* was an attempt to relate religion to all aspects of the world, including politics. Arguably the foremost existential theologian of his day, Tillich (1964) believed that, "true communication of the Gospel means making possible a definite, genuine, decision for or against it" (Chapter 15, para. 1). Given the fact all people participate in human existence and know the complexities of life firsthand this is the only place to

begin in communicating this message. Making this the starting point for preaching centers the congregation around the message the minister shares.

With its heavy emphasis on experience, this theological framework easily lends itself to addressing political issues. *The New World Encyclopedia* (2005) says that “Tillich linked the Christian message to social injustice and the socialist movement” (Tillich, Paul, para. 1). McClure (2007) says a biblical precedent for this type of preaching is found in the “preaching of the oracular prophets” (p. 138). He cites such instances from scripture as dream interpretations, divination, interpretation of casting lots or the ephod, Saul and the witch of Endor and Jesus answering the Syrophonecian Woman in such a way as to open up the possibility of redemption of her life.

The weakness of this theology however, is that man’s existence overshadows and takes priority over Holy Scripture. An article in *Issues Etc.* says,

By Existence is meant, not change or any similar abstraction, but personal reality- the subjective perception and creation of meaning in one's innermost self.

Theological existentialism is impatient with all formal, abstract, propositional statements of doctrine or ethics, believing, in Kierkegaard's phrase, that "truth is subjectivity" and that one must discover it in the particulars of experience, not in any alleged universal, timeless generalities. (“Human Dignity and Human Rights,” p. 2)

If existentialism begins with the supposition that the thoughts, experiences and conclusions of people are the determining factors for life then no outside authority- even scripture- can inform or shape their worldview. Therefore, if a preacher follows existentialism, statements made from the pulpit about government and politics might be

driven more by a preacher's own personal experiences with these institutions rather than with the Bible.

Transcendental Theology

A direct opposite of existential theology is what McClure calls "transcendental theology". At its core, this framework for preaching centers upon the Word as the starting point for the sermon. McClure (2007) says, "The Word has absolute authority and is the guide for how a person views and interprets life experiences. This word is found in the Bible and in the life and work of Jesus Christ as told in scripture" (p. 138). By and large we see this approach espoused by many conservative and evangelical theologians and homileticians who place Scripture in the preeminent position. For them, there is no other starting place.

For instance, R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (1992) reminds us that "true preaching begins with this confession: we preach because God has spoken" (p. 14). In even clearer prose, John Stott (1982) makes this claim:

Our responsibility as preachers now begins to emerge. This is not primarily to give our 20th century testimony to Jesus (most Western preaching today tends to be too subjective) but rather to relay with faithfulness to the twentieth century (and endorse from our own experience) the only authoritative witness there is, namely God's own witness to Christ through the first century apostolic eyewitness. (p. 98)

This statement is representative of those preachers who hold to the belief that scripture informs all of life. This is why this theological framework is always in such

great tension with the existential model. According to this approach, at no time is God's Word secondary to experience.

Therefore, preachers who hold to this theology might find themselves restrained to comment on political structures and circumstances because their chosen scripture might not allow it. Additionally, the Bible may present an altogether different view on civil matters and governments than that which modern, western, conservative Christianity espouses. If the emphasis of this approach is upon a God who has spoken and still speaks through his Word then preachers must be true to what He is saying.

Ethical-Political Theology

This third theological framework, "ethical-political theology", allows the preacher to overtly challenge injustice, inequities of power, people of power and oppression. This model purports that evil is often formalized and established by political powers to which God's word proclaims an alternate vision. The biblical examples for such a theology go back to the Hebrew prophets and Jesus Christ proclaiming the kingdom of God. In this model the preacher stands against the political powers and structures of the day to offer a Word from God that is an alternate vision of the world.

In his book, *Where Have All the Prophets Gone?* Marvin A. McMickle (2006) labels this type of preaching "Prophetic Preaching".

Prophetic preaching shifts the focus of a congregation from what is happening to them as a local church to what is happening to them as a part of society. Prophetic Preaching then asks the question, 'What is the role or the appropriate response of

our congregation, our association, and our denomination to the events that are occurring within our society and throughout the world'? (p. 2)

This type of theological approach is often reflected in the preaching of feminists, liberationists and black preachers. Liberation theologians Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine G. Gonzalez (1980) say,

If we become aware of the social, political, and economic systems that control our lives, we may then find ourselves on the same side of the struggle as those who are the outcast of those systems. We can then speak from our own experience of bondage and of the problems and frustrations in seeking to be free. (p. 27)

Those who adopt this model for their preaching will have less trouble defending their right to make political statements during a sermon. When a minister studies scripture from this perspective he or she is predisposed to finding at what point the passage speaks to the present circumstances of civil government. The danger is that not every scripture lend itself to political statement. Try as we may some scriptures do not speak to the political structures or issues of our day. Therefore, ministers face the possibility of twisting or manipulating passages to fit their theological framework.

Organic-Aesthetic Theology

Another framework begins neither with the Word of God nor with the experiences of humanity but with the preacher perceiving God's Word as being within all creation. This is an approach to preaching called Organic-Aesthetic Theology. It is based upon the idea that all of creation is the instrument by which God proclaims his word. Therefore, it is the minister's task to find what God is revealing about himself in and through His

creation and proclaim that loudly to God's people. McClure (2007) cites as precedent for this type of preaching the Gospel accounts where Jesus uses activities and objects from everyday life to communicate to listeners the truths of the Kingdom of God. Often this approach helps listeners realize the presence and work of God in the world around them (p.139).

According to this theological perspective Jesus used elements of political institutions to reveal God's truth; it is possible to support sermons which contain political comments. Of note, this approach does best at finding God in unexpected places- even politics. If a minister uses such comments to show how God is present and at work in the secular institutions that govern our earthly life, then it may actually be a source of encouragement.

While these are four distinct theologies of preaching it is possible for preachers to combine two or more of them at any given time. However, there will always be one dominant theology which guides a preacher's development of political sermons. A minister's theology of preaching either allows or prohibits such statements. However, this is not the only factor when considering the appropriateness of discussing politics within a sermon. A minister's personal theology of preaching must be balanced with his or her faith group's political theology.

CHURCHES AND POLITICAL THEOLOGIES

When a preacher chooses to speak on politics from the pulpit there must be a serious consideration as to how his particular faith group views such activity. Amy Black (2008) points out that "theological traditions create frameworks that help us interpret and

clarify biblical truth” (p.144). With in-depth study of the various Christian traditions one realizes that a particular faith group’s political theology determines its view of the church’s involvement in matters of state. These perspectives are not exclusive to the particular tradition. Since many traditions share the same basic beliefs, it is therefore safe to assume that these theologies can cross denominational lines.

Catholic Political Theology

While this project addresses Protestant preachers and their treatment of political issues within a sermon it is beneficial to examine the political theology of the Catholic Church. In recent times, it is not uncommon to find Protestants and Roman Catholics joining forces to support or oppose the political entities or issues of the day. Jared Patterson supports this fact by pointing out,

Over the past three decades politics has been the single greatest agent of unity—not division—among Catholics and evangelicals in America. Since the late 1970’s their combined strength has coalesced to form a colossal conservative political force in both state and national politics. (Rude Politics: Evangelicals Vs. Catholics, n.d., para 7)

In 313 A. D. the newly-crowned emperor of Rome, Constantine, issued the *Edict of Milan* which brought the church and state into a harmonious relationship. The edict’s main emphasis was to end the persecutions of the Church and to provide financial aid to Christian causes (Garlow, 2000, p. 57). Over the years the Catholic Church still retains an attitude of cooperation among church and state.

The cooperative nature of the church with the state is affirmed in how the Catholic Church engages the secular world. Those who have made a study of Catholic Social Ethics and Political Advocacy are consistent in confirming this sacred/secular cooperation. For instance, Kristin Heyer (2005), a professor of Christian Ethics at Loyola Marymont University states, "In Post-Vatican II a pastoral concern for public affairs and the governance of nations and the international community has prevailed." (p. 102).

When addressing the political theology of the Catholic Church she observes,

Broadly understood, Catholic social thought and action are grounded in a theology of fundamental goodness of creation, the mediation of the divine through the human (incarnation, sacramental principle), and the Catholic insistence on the universality of God's concern. ...Since human understanding and religious faith are not opposed (though not identical either), constructive dialogue and interaction can ensue between the Catholic community and wider culture. (Heyer, 2005, p. 102)

Certainly, if cooperation and dialogue are expected between the Church and government then the framer of such dialogue would be the Priest who stands before his congregation at mass during the ministry of the Word and frames the political debate.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops says,

Together with the priest and deacons, assisted by the religious leaders of the Church, we are to teach fundamental moral principles that help Catholics form their consciences carefully, to provide guidance on moral dimensions of public decisions, and to encourage the faithful to carry out their responsibility in political life. (Forming Conscience for Faithful Citizenship, para 15)

The Catholic Church, therefore, expects the priest not to shy away from political issues. Instead, the Church demands the priest to shed light and offer guidance upon such issues. This guidance is to be biblical and completely aligned with the Church's stated positions.

Anabaptist Political Theology

"Anabaptist" is the name given to religious groups because of their adamant stance against infant baptism and their belief in baptism by profession of faith. Mennonites and Quakers may be the most recognized groups under the Anabaptists umbrella. In addition to their beliefs about infant baptism and profession of faith, Anabaptists are also known for the strict line they draw between church and state. Although, this civil/sacred line is very distinct, Anabaptists do affirm their obligation to witness to civil government. For instance, article twenty-four of the Mennonite's Confession of Faith reads,

We may participate in government or other institutions of society only in ways that do not violate the love and holiness taught by Christ and do not compromise our loyalty to Christ. We witness to the nations by being that "city on a hill" which demonstrates the way of Christ. We also witness by being ambassadors for Christ, calling the nations (and all persons and institutions) to move toward justice, peace, and compassion for all people. In so doing, we seek the welfare of the city to which God has sent us. (Article 24, para 4)

Even with this guidance Mennonite pastors find themselves divided over how to enact it. At the Mennonite Church USA's 2005 General Assembly the question of

political involvement was addressed with no action taken. Two approaches were presented by assembly delegates. One approach saw that Mennonite congregants were identifying themselves too much with political parties and causes and called for a five year sabbatical from all political activities in order to reclaim the true Anabaptist perspective on church and state (Speaking to Our Government: A Proposal for a Sabbatical from Politics, para 7). The other approach called for Mennonites to continue to witness to government not only indirectly through their Christian witness but, directly with words and actions in accordance with Article Twenty- four of the Confession of Faith (Speaking to Government: An Important Part of Faithful Witness, para 2).

These two approaches demonstrate the difficulty pastors can encounter addressing political issues within the Anabaptist tradition. Indeed, Anabaptists draw a strict line between church and state but it does not remove their responsibility to speak to civil government. Therefore, it is the Anabaptist preacher who must establish for the congregation what the proper level of involvement is.

Lutheran Political Theology

Martin Luther was a sixteenth-century Catholic Priest who became a Protestant Reformer after years of struggling with the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. The ideas that Luther presented contradicted many Catholic traditions. However, to Luther's credit, these ideas were based exclusively upon the Word of God. According to Garlow (2005) Martin Luther emphasized four tenets: Sola scriptura (by scripture alone), Sola Christus (by Christ alone), Sola gratia (by grace alone), Sola fide (by faith alone) (p. 146).

Lutherans are those Christian believers who trace their origin to Martin Luther and hold to his teachings based upon these four tenets.

Through the decades of their evolving political theology, the Lutheran Church has sought to stay true to the four original emphases by minimizing the church's activity in the sphere of governance and politics. This is due to the fact that Lutherans place the Word and Sacraments as the primary responsibility of the church and hold to a strict division of functions between the church and state. While the two are created and instituted by God they function differently and fulfill different purposes. In *Project Wittenberg: A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* it is put forth that,

Although both Church and State are ordinances of God, yet they must not be commingled. Church and state have entirely different aims. By the Church God would save men....By the State, God would maintain external order among men.... It follows that the means which the Church and State employ to gain their ends are entirely different. The Church may not employ any other means than the preaching of the Word of God. (Of Church and State section, para 34)

This statement of belief gives strict guidance to Lutheran pastors who address political issues during their sermon. Before a Lutheran pastor takes the pulpit on Sunday and speaks to the secular, political issues of the day he or she must first examine whether his or her comments are within the boundaries of the doctrinal guidelines of the Lutheran Church. Not to do so is a violation of the trust placed in the minister by his or her church.

Reformed Political Theology

When discussing any aspect of Reformed theology, names like Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and John Knox figure prominently, especially in matters of Church and State. The Reformed Church was created due to the theological exploration and explanations of these three figures in which the Sovereignty of God was seen as the foundation upon which every other doctrine rests.

John Calvin is the one history credits most with making political activism a major principle of Reformed theology. Calvin, because of his political involvement in the city of Geneva, developed a theology that sought to integrate religion and the state. In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin specifies that humans are subject to two kingdoms- the eternal and the civil (Book IV, Chapter 20, para 3). Jim Garlow (2000) points out that Calvin's thoughts about the two kingdoms caused his focus in Geneva to be that of bringing a morally chaotic city into harmony with biblical teachings (p. 160).

Whether Calvin was successful at harmonizing the church/state relationship is not the concern of this study. What is most noteworthy is that Calvin used his religious office, particularly as a preacher in Saint Pierre Church, to accomplish his political objectives. Calvin's theological perspective eliminated any difficulty of coupling together the aims of the church and the aims of the state. One writer remarks,

What made Geneva different was how carefully and clearly formulated were the powers of the church authorities, and how equally detailed were its relations with the government. In most other towns this developed organically. In Geneva it was instituted in legislation. (Knox 2009, Geneva Redux section, para 3)

While contemporary reformed theologians know that the Church does not have the authority it had over the government of Geneva in the 1500s, the Reformed Church still emphasizes civil involvement among its membership. For example, Reformed theologian, Richard Mouw (2007) makes the following claim in his discussion of Jesus and the Christian's role in society:

The proper alternative is not to turn 'apolitical'. Jesus wants us to think critically about accepted political and economic policies as well as about widespread social practices. This means thinking together about the big issues in our culture. It even means arguing together, so that we can discern the will of God for specific areas of social concern. (p.1)

This modern view of how the church should deal with political issues certainly is consistent with reformed theology which has great significance for the preaching event. A Reformed pastor who addresses issues of government from the pulpit can do so with great confidence knowing that he or she is aligned with early and modern theological thought. This will result in greater confidence in expounding the Word when it relates to specific political issues.

Mainstream Protestant Political Theology

What is a mainline church? During a PBS, Frontline interview author John Green identified mainline denominations as those who do not believe in the inerrancy of scripture, they do not believe that Jesus is the only way to salvation, and they do not hold personal conversion and witnessing in high priority (John Green section, para. 3). According to 2007 survey results from the Pew Forum, 18.1 percent of the American

population is affiliated with a mainline church. Additionally, this survey includes under the mainline umbrella churches like the American Baptist, United Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Presbyterian Church USA, Anglican/Episcopal Church and certain Nondenominational churches in the mainline tradition (Key Findings and Statistics on Religion in America section, p.1).

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of mainline churches is the heavy emphasis upon social justice and their involvement in the political process. Historically, mainline denominations were active in political issues like Slavery, Prohibition, Women's Suffrage and the Vietnam War. Today, with their affiliation with the National Council of Churches and its sister organization The World Council of Churches, mainline churches retain their heavy involvement in politics. Some scholarly observers point out that even with a cursory reading of mainline sermon manuscripts one sees the theme of the church as the tip of the spear to correct political wrongs and bring about social reform (Guth, et al., 1997, p. 38).

Southern Baptist Political Theology

A discussion of political theology would not be complete without an examination of the Southern Baptist Convention because it is the largest Protestant denomination with 16 million members and 42,000 churches and it has, for many years, been at the forefront of political involvement (Guth et al., 1997, p. 29). At times seen as a Juggernaut, the Southern Baptist Convention has fought many local, states, and national political battles in support of its affiliate churches.

Southern Baptists began their existence as religious outcasts in Puritan New England with only a few churches and about 400 members. After the Civil War Southern Baptists began to experience growth and expansion until today the Southern Baptist Convention is established throughout the United States. Over the years the Convention was divided by “moderates” and “conservatives” with the “conservatives” winning and consolidating power in the 1980s.

Their hegemony extends not only within the Protestant Church but within the political arena. Fueled in the late 70s and early 80s by Southern Baptist preacher Dr. Jerry Falwell the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) became the rallying point for conservative values and policies. In fact it is noted that their political focus was multi-dimensional.

The Baptists did more than applaud and just wave flags. They condemned departures from traditional sexual morality, opposed abortion and fetal tissue research, expressed concern for religious liberties, criticized the National Endowment for the Arts funding obscene art, attacked alcohol ads, proposed tax cuts for families, endorsed parental choice in education, and applauded Bush for the Gulf War. (Guth et al., 1997, p. 30)

The SBC political involvement makes great use of the pulpit and the preaching event. Southern Baptist pastors do preach a wide variety of scriptural sermons but some will reserve time throughout the year to specifically address political issues. As an example, according to the Baptist *Messenger*, Doctor Ed Young, Senior Pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, preached a sermon series entitled “Politicked”. On the Sunday before the 2008 Presidential Election he informed his congregation that scripture

was the only resource needed to decide for who a Christian should vote (Foust, 2008, Introduction section, para 1).

The late Dr. Jerry Falwell perhaps did more to integrate preaching and political issues within the Southern Baptist Convention than any other Southern Baptist preacher. Due to his vast television ministry hundreds of thousands of people were acclimatized to this kind of preaching. It is highly likely that because of Dr. Falwell and other highly visible Southern Baptist preachers political preaching has an established and accepted place within the SBC.

Holiness Denomination Political Theology

The American Holiness Movement which began at the end of the Civil War traces its theological roots to John Wesley's concept of Entire Sanctification. In America the Holiness Movement was founded and nurtured by people like Phoebe Palmer, William Booth, B.T. Roberts, Charles Finney and Orange Scott. These holiness leaders were instrumental in establishing this movement where personal, heart purity was emphasized. However, what is most interesting is that this movement identified itself with social action and social reform. For instance, William Booth founded the Salvation Army which is still in existence today. Also, Holiness denominations located churches in southeastern United States after the Civil War specifically to support the anti-slavery movement. Years later, it focused its efforts on supporting prohibition laws. Social action was paramount to the holiness message.

Today, holiness churches are identified as those denominations which are Wesleyan or Pentecostal in theology. Many are independent with only the local church as

the governing body. Politically, holiness churches are very engaged. A Baptist Press article cites a 2006 survey conducted by the Ellison Research Company for Facts and Trends (2006) which show that Pentecostals are more politically active than any other church in America including Southern Baptists (Laity More Moderate section, para. 2). Much of this has to do with the predisposition of holiness pastors toward prophetic preaching whereby the preacher decries the abysmal state of American morality and calls the church to stand for Christian values.

EXEGESIS

What specific validation and justification can a minister draw from the Bible for addressing political issues? This is an extremely important matter. If a minister is to stand before congregants and speak for God on issues of government then ministers must not only be sure of their personal homiletical theology and be familiar with their denomination's political theology but he or she must know what provisions the Bible makes for such content. There is no better source to give authority to the minister's words than strong biblical justification.

In preparation for this thesis-project many books and articles were read which explored the sacred/civil relationship. As these materials were reviewed and compared, certain biblical scriptures emerged in a majority of the sources. These passages are: Matthew 5: 13 – 16, Matthew 22: 15 - 22, and Romans 13: 1 – 6. Both those who support political involvement by the church and those who are against it use these three scriptures as justification for their position. Therefore, interpretation of these verses is a crucial

matter. The conclusions reached by the preacher are foundational for what assertions and statements are made.

Salt and Light (Matthew 5:13 – 16)

When early Christian converts read the Gospel of Matthew they viewed it more as an instruction manual than a formal literary work. Matthew, a former tax collector for the Roman Empire, wrote to a Jewish audience who were new to Christianity. Craig S. Keener (1993) affirms this by pointing out that, “This Gospel...may have been used as a training manual for new Christians (Mt 28: 19); rabbis taught oral traditions, but Jewish Christians needed a body of teachings in writing for converts” (p. 45).

As far as form and structure of Matthew’s gospel, differing opinions exist as to how Matthew arranged the material. Some biblical commentators see the content linked in a geographical scheme where each location mentioned by the writer ushers in a new narrative and teaching section. Others, like D. A. Carson (1984), down play the reliability of rigid outlines and opt to see this Gospel “as a collection of vignettes which should be seen as guides through the material and not as a comprehensive explanation” (p. 51). However, possibly the easiest and most readily available way to plot the material is by focusing upon the five discourses of Jesus contained in this book. It seems obvious that Matthew used these teaching sections to connect the narratives and give the book form, structure and flow. Robert G. Gromacki (1974) says, “The content of the book must...be related to the literary placement of these discourses” (p. 74).

Matthew chapter 5 verses 13 – 16 is contained within the first discourse which is commonly titled, “The Sermon on the Mount”. The Sermon on the Mount, on the surface,

is a collection of teachings Jesus gave to his disciples upon the Mount of Olives. The entirety of this material, found in chapters five through seven of Matthew, revolves around the theme of the Kingdom of God. Each teaching section within this discourse focuses upon some aspect of citizenship within God's Kingdom here on earth. Matthew is the only book of the Synoptic Gospels to include the sayings of 5:13 - 16. Structurally, these verses must be viewed as being linked to the preceding ten verses. Matthew 5: 3 – 12 are popularly referred to as the “Beatitudes” given that Jesus is identifying an inner state which is to be present within the followers of Christ. As the *Liberty Bible Commentary* states,

The opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount indicate that this message deals with the inner state of mind and heart which is the indispensable absolute of true Christian discipleship. It delineates the outward manifestations of character and conduct of the true believer and genuine disciple. (Falwell, 1996, p. 256)

Matthew 5: 13 – 16 show the influence and the purpose that kingdom people are to have within the world. As Carson puts it, “The kingdom norms (vv.3- 12) so work out in the lives of the kingdom heirs as to produce the kingdom witness (vv. 13- 16)” (p. 140). Confirming this thought J. Hampton Keathley III (1997) writes, “So, two analogies, salt and light, are used to show our purpose and our obligation before the world as the people of God” (p. 2). Taking this to be true, then we must ask if being salt and light extend to the political arena. Can a preacher use these verses to justify his political preaching? The historical context within which Jesus spoke these words provides helpful insight to answer this question.

By the time of the Messiah, Israel had been the subject of foreign rule for over seven hundred years. Beginning with the empire of Babylon, Israel was the possession of more powerful nations used by God to discipline His people. When Jesus entered the scene Rome had established a firm grip on the region. Describing the circumstances of Roman rule “Jewish History.com” says,

After Herod the Great’s death, Judea was split into three parts and divided among Herod’s three sons. By 6 C.E., Herod’s descendants disobeyed and angered the Romans. As a result, Roman procurators, or governors, were sent to rule Judea and Jerusalem directly. Of these procurators, Pontius Pilate (26-36 C.E.) is perhaps the most famous for his involvement in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. (p. 1)

While some opportunistic Jews colluded and cooperated with Rome, most Jews longed for their independence from Rome. As Jesus grew in recognition and popularity among the Jewish population many hung their hopes on Him as their deliverer.

According to J. R. Porter,

The Jews had long hoped for 'the day of the Lord', when God would act to save his people. There were several different hopes of a 'Messiah', a savior, whom God would send, and such hopes ran high at the time of Jesus. Some saw the Messiah in more spiritual terms, as a priestly or prophetic figure, but in popular expectation he was to be a political liberator. (p. 164)

It is only when we consider Matthew 5:13-16 in its cultural context that we begin to see the Christian’s true relationship and obligation to the world.

You are the salt of the earth... the pronoun is emphatic and plural in meaning that Jesus is designating a particular group of people. The statement that Jesus makes applies immediately to the disciples to whom he is speaking but ultimately the larger, universal body of believers. The prepositional phrase ...of *the earth*... tells the disciples where they are to be salt. *Earth* as used in this scripture is defined as “the abode of men and animals” (Strong, 1890, p.292). Yet, the key point for proper interpretation is to understand verse 13 as focusing upon the condition of the earth with and without salt. It conveys to the disciples the necessity for them to be salt. F.F. Bruce (1996) states that when Jesus compared his disciples to salt he leaves much for the disciple to infer. “In what respect they are said to be salt is not specified, so the nature of their function has to be inferred from the context and what is known of the effects of salt” (p. 430). To fully understand this passage one must keep in mind the extreme value salt had in ancient biblical times. According to the *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Facts*, “Salt held a place of great importance in the primitive and simple society of the ancient Israelites. It was the chief economic product of the ancient world and the Hebrews used it in a variety of ways” (Packer, Tenney, White, Jr, 1995, p. 207).

Matthew’s treatment of this verse is primarily with common, household uses in mind. There are three main uses and effects of salt which are pertinent to 5:13. First, salt was used as a flavoring or seasoning agent. Indeed, Jesus phrases his question about salt losing its saltiness around the idea of taste. *If salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?* There is a quality about salt that is identifiable by its taste. Salt has its own distinct flavor yet it blends and enhances the taste of any food to which it is added.

Second, salt produces thirst. It is a common experience of those who taste salt, either in food or by itself, to immediately sense a growing thirst. Science explains that,

There are sensors in the thirst center in the brain that keep tabs on the saltiness of the blood. When the thirst center goes on alert because things are too salty and the body needs water to dilute the salt, that's when you start to feel thirsty. (Indiana Public Media, Why Salt Makes you Thirsty, Section 2, para 2)

Therefore, by its very nature, salt makes a person crave something else in order to satisfy.

Third, and, perhaps most familiar to those who were hearing these words of Jesus, salt was used as a preservative for meat. Spoilage of food was a huge problem for people in Jesus' day. In its commentary on Matthew 5:13, Precept Austin highlights this fact by saying,

Jesus is speaking in a time when there were no ice makers or refrigerators. There was need for a simple method of preservation of foodstuffs from decay and corruption and this was the primary function of salt. In fact the only way to preserve meat in the hot climate of Palestine was to salt it or soak it in a salt solution. This practice is still common in many remote areas of the world. (Salt Preserves Section, p. 11)

Jesus introduces a contrast in the second half of verse 13. This contrast involves a question with its answer in verse 14. *But if salt loses its taste, how can it be made salty again?* While to our modern minds this may seem like an absurdity scholars tell us that those hearing Jesus knew about salt-less salt. This was due to its location and its mixture with other components. Keathly (1997) writes,

Salt was taken from the Dead Sea or dug from the marsh areas. This meant it was often impure and mingled with vegetable and earth substance like gypsum. If the gypsum was in sufficient quantities then the salt became alkaline and would lose its salty character, savor, and effect because of the contamination or admixture.

(p.2)

Salt in this condition would obviously be discarded without thought for its restoration.

In verses 14 – 16 Jesus employs the same theme but with a different element. *You are the light of the world*. Again, as with verse 13, Jesus states the emphatic with the definite article. In other words he is inferring that exclusive of all others his disciples are the light of the world. Apart from them there is no light. So whatever else one can attribute to a follower of Christ they should possess the qualities of light.

As with verse 13, verse 15 sets up a contrast between two opposing actions. Both actions are related to what one does with a light. This entire contrast stems from the particular statement he makes about light and a city. *A city on a hill cannot be hidden*. Given the mountainous terrain of the Middle Eastern geography, no doubt cities built on hills could be seen punctuating the nighttime sky. “Often built of white limestone, ancient towns gleamed in the sun and could not easily be hidden. At night the inhabitants’ oil lamps would shed some glow over the surrounding area” (Carson, Wessel, and Liefeld, 1984, p. 139).

Now Jesus, using the indefinite pronoun, states a contradictory action in regards to the light. *No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a bushel basket....* Linking this with the preceding statement Jesus highlights the sheer folly of trying to hide a lamp once

it has been lit. It is as reasonable as hiding an elevated city at night. Jesus contrasts this foolish action with the proper action of placing the light on a stand so that it can perform its intended function- giving light to all.

The crucial section of this passage is verse 16 because here Jesus makes his application to his disciples. Everything has led up to this teaching point. It is a statement of comparison which gives meaning to all he has previously said about light. *In the same way let your let shine before men....* As light is not hidden, Jesus' true disciple cannot hide. They will be seen as they should be. Yet the conclusion of this verse provides the result of disciples letting their light shine, *so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.* A cause and effect relationship exists here. What is the ultimate effect when disciples let their let shine? People see the truth and God is praised.

Because salt and light were common in bible times it is definite that as Jesus is directing Christians to effect their world in the same way salt effects food and light effects its environment. As salt, we are to enhance society with the absolute best things we have to offer. We are to produce a thirst within those in society for God and the things of God. And, certainly, disciples are to preserve whatever is good, valuable, and sacred in the world. Indeed, our presence should slow down societal, moral decay. But the question is how do we accomplish these things? How are we to be salt and light in our society as Jesus intends?

Politics and engaging with society's governments is an approach many pastors see as the most viable option to accomplish Matthew 5: 13 – 16. Dr. D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe (2008) state,

We live in a country where Christ gets little to no glory. We see the whole counsel of God must include a well-developed sociology, a transformation of the institutions of men. If we are going to see the redemption of the earth, it is going to involve not just people but the works of their hands as well. What a different place this country would be. (p. 43)

Any pastor who agrees with this view will follow in the vein of these two authors. They will likely see that this passage encourages Christian political activism and preach such a message from the pulpit. Yet, this passage contains two structural points which must be considered by the preacher before this passage can be expounded upon. First, if Matthew 5:13-16 is immediately connected with Jesus' preceding teachings, then those verses both define and limit the meaning of a Christian response to civil government. In other words, we are only salt and light to the extent we embody and live out verses 3-12. Confirming this thought, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible* says,

The people who can be certain of a future are the humble, the forgiving, the pure, those who set their hearts on what is right, who try to heal the rifts. And here and now, these are the ones who put the seasoning into life, who stop the rot, who light up the way. By what they do and say and how they react, they show men something of what God himself is like. (Alexander and Alexander, 1973, p. 478)

Second, if we rightfully see that the salt and light metaphor can be extended to all of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, then Jesus' disciples are to accomplish all the things of verses 13 – 15 by living out all the teachings of Matthew chapters 5 – 7.

Therefore, preachers cannot simply encourage political activism or engaging with civil government without showing congregants what that will look like. How does the

Christian think and act politically and still be salt and light? What we find in Matthew 5: 1 - 12 as well as what we read in the entire Sermon on the Mount does not always correspond to today's political activism. Preachers must speak to issues but they cannot use these verses as justification for anything that would weaken the qualities of salt and light in their listeners. Nor, can they include references to politics and government which lead people to believe that salt and light and the entire Sermon on the Mount can be redefined for the sake of political expediency.

Matthew 22: 15 – 22

Matthew 22: 15 – 22 deals with the issue of what Christ's followers owe Caesar and what they owe God. Although this pericope presents a completed theme or idea, the larger narrative runs from Matthew 21: 23 to chapter 23: 46. In the section preceding 22: 15 – 22, Matthew narrates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (21: 1 – 10), the clearing of the temple (21: 12 – 17) and the cursing of the Fig tree (21: 18 – 22). From 21: 23 Jesus experiences opposition by the religious leaders.

Robert Gromacki (1974) says, "Christ cleansing the temple brought Him into open conflict with the priests" (p.87). The type of opposition which Jesus faced was ideological interrogation. According to expositor, Arno Clement Gaebelain (2007) those who pitted themselves against Jesus were united by a common goal. He writes,

This was their only weapon now. They tried to find a way to ensnare Him, and having defeated Him, they intended to publish their victory abroad and find cause to accuse Him and reject Him. The second half of this chapter is occupied with the record of these attempts. The three great factions, Pharisees, Herodians and

Sadducees combine in this. Ritualists, Worldlings and Rationalists make common cause to defeat the Lord. Though so essentially different, they unite in this one thing, the rejection of the Lord. (p. 72)

The first interrogation is Matthew 21: 23 – 27 where Jesus' authority is questioned. Then in chapter 22: 15 – 22 the religious leaders question him concerning the issue of paying taxes. Next in 22: 23 – 33 the scribes try to trap him with a question about the resurrection of the dead. Finally, a teacher of the law questions Jesus concerning the greatest commandment. It is the second of these questions concerning paying taxes which will be examined because it speaks to a Christian's secular and sacred obligations.

As an interrogation narrative verses 15 – 22 fall into two parts. The first being the question and the second being Jesus' answer. Verses 15 through 16 contain the introductory statements which provide for the reader important elements in order to understand this particular question. First, they reveal that the Pharisees *went and plotted....* The phrase is *sumboulion elabon* which carries the idea of deliberating or meeting with another person in order to devise a plan (Strong, 1890, p. 68). This establishes the fact that this question about paying taxes was not a spur-of-the-moment question from the Pharisees. As Barclay (1958) states, "Now we see the Jewish leaders launching their counter-attack; and they do so by directing at Jesus carefully formulated questions in public, while the crowd looked on" (p. 300). Second, these opening words reveal the purpose behind this and all the questioning Jesus would encounter from the religious leaders. Barclay comments that the intent of the religious leaders was to "entrap him in what he said....their aim is to make Jesus discredit Himself by his own words in

the presence of the people” (p. 300). Third, these opening verses introduce the group known as the Herodians. According to James Orr (1915),

They were not a religious sect, but, as the name implies, a court or political party, supporters of the dynasty of Herod. Nothing is known of them beyond what the Gospels state. Whatever their political aims, they early perceived that Christ's pure and spiritual teaching on the kingdom of God was irreconcilable with these, and that Christ's influence with the people was antagonistic to their interests.
(p.30)

Therefore, the Herodians would be greatly interested in how Jesus viewed civil obligations specifically, if they should pay the Roman tax or not. “If he said yes, the people would call him a traitor; if he said no, the Roman rulers would promptly deal with him. By either alternative the Pharisees and Herodians reckoned that they could break his power” (Buttrick, 1951, p. 518).

In verse 16 the questioners begin by highlighting the exceptional moral and ethical qualities of Jesus. They say he is true, he teaches truth, and is impartial. From the verses which follow, these compliments are an attempt to paint Jesus into a corner. As John Macarthur (2009) states,

Now they've got Him in the corner, they think where He now knows that they think so highly of Him, that He's got so much integrity, so much truth, so much conviction, and so much courage of that conviction that He's going to answer them truthfully. He's going to have to live up to His reputation now. (p. 7)

In other words, the Pharisees are saying, “on the basis of all we have just said about you give us a straight answer.” Commenting on these verses, Chamblin Knox (1989) says,

After first setting Jesus up with flattering words (v. 16) - the truth of which will become all too clear before this conversation is over! - the Pharisees and the Herodians pose their question: ‘Tell us, then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?’ (p. 289)

Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor or not? Since the question is posed by the disciples of the Pharisees it is right to assume that their concern is about the religious law. The *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (1984) points out that “the question ...is theological as all legal questions inevitably were to a first-century Jew” (p. 458). Indeed, when they phrased the question in this manner they implied a societal dichotomy. There is either obligation to God or obligation to Caesar. The wording on the question expects a yes or no answer in reply.

In verses 18 – 20 we see that Jesus will not be hemmed in by either their hypocritical compliments or their questioning. It is not clear who in the crowd produced the coin when Jesus asked for it but it is certain that the currency was minted by Rome because Jesus refers to the image and inscription of Caesar upon it. History confirms that the Roman coinage of this time would have on it the image of Tiberius Caesar with an accompanying description stating his divinity. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of Mark* (1974) gives an informative description of such a coin.

The only coin that was accepted for payment of taxes in Judea, as throughout imperial territory, was the Roman denarius.... The denarius of Tiberius portrayed the emperor as the semi-divine son of the god Augustus and the goddess Livia and bore the (abbreviated) inscription 'Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of Divine Augustus' on the obverse and 'Pontifex Maximus' on the reverse. Both the representation and the inscription were rooted in the imperial cult and constituted a claim to divine honors. (p. 424)

Jesus' reply to their answer is fuzzy when it comes to interpretation. *Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's and to God the things that are God's*. The word is more accurately translated "render" which means to give back to someone something which is rightfully his (Vine, Unger, and White, 1985, p. 523). How did he say this? Did he make a declaration or give a command? Did he say it nonchalantly with a shrug of the shoulders? There is conjecture concerning this point. The way one answers this question will determine how one sees the civil/sacred obligation.

For instance A. Lukyn Williams states,

Christ does not take either side in the controversy; he makes no question of the mutual rights of conquered and conquerors; he utters no aspiration for the recovery of independence....the things of God are ourselves- our life, powers, faculties, means; to use these in God's service is our duty and our privilege....let a citizen do his duty to God, and he will find his obligations to the civil powers are coincident and harmonious. (p. 361)

F.F. Bruce in the *Hard Saying of Jesus* (1998) also sees that Jesus is stating that the civil/spiritual spheres can be complementary and not mutually exclusive. He points out,

Caesar's coins were best for paying Caesar's tribute. If that was what Caesar wanted, let him have it; the claims of God were not transgressed by such use of Caesar's money. What was really important was to discover what God's claims were and see to it that they were met. (p. 444)

This interpretation gives Christians great latitude in satisfying the civil demands while staying true to their loyalty to God.

However, other commentators are less definite as to Jesus' intent. Marcus Borg (2000) states,

This text offers little or no guidance for tax season. It neither claims taxation is legitimate nor gives aid to anti-tax activists. It neither counsels universal acceptance of political authority nor its reverse. But it does raise the provocative and still relevant question: What belongs to God, and what belongs to Caesar? And what if Caesar is Hitler, or apartheid, or communism, or global capitalism? What is to be the attitude of Christians toward domination systems, whether ancient or modern? (What Belongs to God, para. 5)

So, how do these verses deal with preaching politics in our present culture? It depends upon how a minister limits or expands this passage. D. James Kennedy (2008) takes a broad view with these verses. He comments, "What does the Bible say about our responsibility as citizens of this country? It is our responsibility to do what good citizenship requires. For us, today, one aspect of giving to Caesar that which is his is

through political involvement” (p. 25). Later on in the same book Kennedy reiterates his view by saying, “And we should certainly take part in promoting Christian responsibility to the political systems to which we are responsible” (p. 33). Therefore, according to this view, the Christian cannot opt out of the political process but must remain engaged in it in order to fulfill his or her Christian duty.

Reverend John MacArthur (2008) takes a very different view of what Jesus says. He is emphatic in his declaration that

God does not call the church to influence culture by promoting legislation and court ruling that advance a Scripture point of view. Nor does he condone any type of radical activism that would avoid tax obligations, disobey or seek removal of government officials we don’t agree with, or spend an inordinate amount of time campaigning for a so-called Christian slate of candidates. (p. 1)

Also, Andrew Sandlin (1998) in his article entitled *Jesus and Politics* informs his readers, civil government is a divinely delegated authority.

We should remember that the Roman Empire of Christ’s day was anything but a Christian empire. It was authoritarian, if not in some ways totalitarian. Yet, Jesus Christ did not counsel sedition or revolution, and he counsels his hearers to pay their taxes—even to a corrupt regime. (p. 3)

To preach from the pulpit on political issues then must be done so as to inform individuals how to give to God while at the same time giving to Caesar. The preacher should build within his or her people a healthy respect of government and a deep reverence for God and teach them how to balance the two.

Romans 13: 1 – 6

No other New Testament book written by the Apostle Paul is weightier in sheer length and in theological content than the book of Romans. Indeed,

From very early times the Church felt that *Romans* was so great an expression of the mind of Paul that it must become the possession not of one congregation, but the whole Church. We must remember... that men have always looked on *Romans* as the quintessence of Paul's gospel. (Barclay, 1975, p.10)

Merrill C. Tenney (1961) further highlights the book's theological importance when he says,

Romans, therefore, unlike Corinthians, is not devoted so much to the correction of errors as to the teaching of truth. Although it does not comprise all the fields of Christian thought – for eschatology is notably lacking in its content – it does give a fuller systematic view of the heart of Christianity than any other of Paul's epistles, with the exception of Ephesians. Most of the Pauline epistles are controversial or corrective in nature; Romans is chiefly didactic. (p. 304)

A purpose for Paul writing this book was to introduce himself to the church at Rome. In Romans chapter 15 verses 23 – 33 Paul explains his plans to travel back to Jerusalem to deliver funds he had received in Corinth for the poor in the church. After this he intended to travel to Spain in order to preach the Gospel and establish new churches. Sandwiched between these two events is a trip to Rome which Paul eagerly desires to take. A commentator remarks, "Paul was laying the groundwork for the western expansion of the gospel by establishing rapport with this strategic church. Perhaps he hoped they would finance his proposed evangelization of Spain" (Gromacki,

1974, p. 183). Therefore, Paul methodically puts down his inspired thoughts as a precursor to his visit.

The major sections of this book divide easily between two themes. The first theme may be stated as “What We Believe” and is found in 1: 18 – 11:36. Here Paul deals with heavy theological issues, like Christology, sin, righteousness, life in the Spirit and the question of Israel’s redemption. The second theme can be stated as “How We Will Live” which runs from 12:1 – 15: 13. Paul definitely takes these heady, theological concepts and teachings in the first section and then works them into practical application in the second section. As Warren Wiersbe (1977) states, “In all his letters, Paul concluded with a list of practical duties that were based on the doctrines he had discussed. In the Christian life doctrine and duty always go together. What we believe helps determine how we behave” (p. 147).

In chapter 12 – 15, the Apostle Paul is instructing his readers on how a person lives daily as a Christian. Paul presents three different areas for consideration:

Paul ended his teaching by showing how the righteousness of God could be applied to the daily walk of the believer. His triple thrust included the Christian’s relationship to other Christians in the life of the local church (12: 1- 21), his attitude toward the unsaved, especially government leaders, within society (13: 1- 14) and his deportment in those areas not specifically spelled out in scripture (14: 1 – 15: 13). (Gromacki, 1974, p. 182)

It is very helpful to see 12: 1 – 2 as the key verses for this entire section. To present themselves to God as a living sacrifice Christians are to be transformed in their thinking so that their daily lives do not conform to cultural mindsets or practices. Instead,

what they do stems from a transformed mind that is aligned to the will of God and they respond accordingly. Again, Wiersbe (1977) says, “In Romans 12: 1, we have the ‘therefore’ of dedication, and it is this dedication that is the basis for the other relationships that Paul discussed in this section” (p. 147). This is to include, in a practical way, the Christian’s response to government whether that government is Christian or pagan.

These verses were written at a time when the church was not meeting opposition from the Roman Government. Biblical commentator Joseph Barmby (1950) tells us that the Roman emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome earlier but they had returned. At this time the Christians in Rome are in the beginning of Nero’s reign (p. 389). Therefore, Roman Christians are not in the period of evil persecution which Nero instituted in A.D. 64. Paul was writing to a people who are peacefully living as a religious minority within a pagan society.

For convenience, Romans 13: 1 – 7 will be broken down into three sections – the imperative, the demonstration and, the motivation. This outline helps us dissect the major sections in order to ascertain the passages overarching truth.

In the first section Paul moves from urging Christians to be living sacrifices to commanding them to submit. Verse 1 introduces the material which deals with the relationship between the Christian and the civil government. He begins by presenting submission to civil government as an obligation for all humanity. The phrase “every person” should actually be translated as “every soul”. Paul Fineberg (1999) states,

Paul uses ‘soul’ in typical Old Testament and Jewish understanding of the whole person, not just the immaterial part. Submission to civil authority is especially a

duty that Christians are to fulfill, but is not limited to them alone. The duty has the most universal application. (p. 90)

In this first verse Paul not only commands submission to authorities, but he also gives the rationale behind such submission. This rationale is repeated in different terms throughout the pericope to emphasize God's control of government. Paul commands Christians to submit to rulers for two reasons. First, *there is no authority except from God*. And, second, *those authorities that exist have been instituted by God*.

Paul demands, particularly, for believers to "be subject" to governing authorities. It is important to note that he doesn't simply command obedience but submission. Commenting on this verse, Douglas Moo (1996) defines "being subject" as a person who realizes a definite order and admits that certain individuals or organizations have been given power over them (p. 797). If one is submissive to authority then obedience will be a logical concomitant.

Submission to authority, in this context, is not merely submission to the concept or principle of authority. Instead, a more concrete meaning is intended. Greg Herrick (1997) points out that given the fact that the definite article is not present it is right to conclude that Paul is speaking of submission to an individual who is acting on behalf of and is exercising the power of the Roman government (p. 10).

Second, in verses 2 – 4 Paul demonstrates how being subject to the governing authorities should look when practically lived out in a Christian's daily life. First, a Christian must not resist the one in authority. It is because this authority has been appointed by God. Here, Paul is conveying the idea that someone is acting in opposition to God's civil order. Gerald Cragg (1954) writes,

If public order is part of divine purpose, it is an exceedingly serious thing to set ourselves against it. It means that we have willfully preferred our private aims to the well-being of society; we have exalted our own preferences above the needs of the collective whole. (p. 602)

Also, Paul includes the warning that resisting God's appointed authority will result in the judgment of God upon the Christian. Herrick (1997) concludes that

Given that Paul speaks of the government's power to punish it is most likely that the judgment Paul is speaking of has to do with the earthly judgment rendered by the state upon wrong-doers. Even though this is temporal, rulers remain agents of God. (p. 17)

Second, Paul says that demonstrating submission also means doing good and not wrong. When a Christian's behavior is good it will result in an absence of fear of authority. Paul identifies the primary function of government as punishing wrong and approving what is right and good. He does this by using the image of the sword. Craig S. Keener (1993) says, "The sword' refers to the standard method of execution in the period (beheading); in earlier times the ax had been used. Swords were carried in front of Roman officials to indicate their authority over life and death" (p. 441).

The third section found in verses 4 – 6 is where Paul provides the underlying motive for Christian submission to civil authorities. Beginning with the word "therefore" Paul indicates that these motives stem from all he has said in verses 1 – 4. Paul highlights two reasons. First, Christians are to be subject to the authorities because of the "wrath of God". J. Barmby notes that, "*wrath* here expresses the familiar idea of the Divine wrath against evil-doing, for the execution of which, in the sphere of human law, the magistrate

is the appointed instrument” (p.390). Second, Christians are also subject to the governing authorities because of conscience. In this context, conscience refers to “a believer’s knowledge of God’s will and purposes” (Moo, 1996, p. 803). Although Paul has not directly spoken about a Christian’s conscience in the preceding verses, his words have certainly implied the idea. Drew Worthen remarks that

Here Paul travels from the fear aspect, which society at large must have before them, to the conscience aspect, which all people, especially believers must ever have before them. And the idea here is that for the believer our motivation must not be limited to fearing the repercussions of unlawful behavior, but rather go beyond them to not behaving in an unlawful way because we honor God who has placed men over us for our good. (p.2)

Finally, Paul ends this pericope with a general, overarching statement about giving what is due those in authority. This is the summation of his thought on civil government and the Christian’s response to it. Douglas Moo (1996) states, “Verse 7 has no explicit link to the context, but its call for the discharge of one’s obligations is probably intended to bring the general call for submission to rulers in vv. 1 – 6 to a practical conclusion” (p. 805).

So, what does modern Christianity make of Paul’s instruction concerning the Civil/Christian relationship? It is not surprising Romans 13: 1- 7 is used to justify the stances of both Christian political activists and those who oppose church involvement in politics. Richard Neuhaus (1984) elaborates:

In today’s religious situation, some Christians who favor aggressive participation in the political order are embarrassed by Romans 13. They emphasize the

'historical conditionedness' of Paul's admonitions and insist, quite correctly, that Romans 13 be kept in tension with other passages such as Revelation 13 that put the political powers in a somewhat different light.... Other Christians who are suspicious of political engagements (and sometimes, although not always, are also those who approve of the social order in which they find themselves), cite Romans 13 as the final word on government: 'Let every person *be subject* to the governing authorities'. (p. 169)

Granted, this debate is a very old one but it shows how two groups can read the same passage and come to differing interpretations. It is beneficial for ministers who preach on Romans 13: 1 – 7 to heed the comments of Manfred T. Brauch (1996) when he says, "There are no pat answers. Anyone who suggests easy solutions or indeed *the* Christian response fails to take seriously the complexities of the world in which we find ourselves" (p.576).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has revealed three important considerations about preaching politics. First, a preacher's homiletical theology must be able to explain why he or she preaches on political issues or why he or she refrains. Second, if the preacher is an ordained minister of a Protestant denomination then consideration must be given to how that collective body views politics and society and the churches role within them. Third, no one can claim that scripture prohibits political preaching. In fact, the Bible has much to say about Christians and their government. However, ministers must strive to make sure that their preaching on such scriptures is in line with proper interpretation.

Theology and exegesis are not the only areas to be considered in preaching politics. Once preachers decide to address a political topic then he or she must give attention to constructing the sermon to be delivered. Also, preachers must tap into the body of knowledge which informs present-day Christian political thought. Finally, knowing the audience's view on sermons that deal with political issues is imperative to making a connection which will win a hearing. In the next chapter, these three considerations- sermon structure, Christian political literature and audience analysis- will be explored.

CHAPTER THREE

PREACHING, LITERARY AND AUDIENCE CONSIDERATIONS

INTRODUCTION

When ministers take up the task of preaching politics a major consideration revolves around the idea of ethics. Is it a right use of the pulpit to address topics which are of a civil and political nature? This must be the first question answered by any minister who seeks to establish pastoral integrity with their congregation. The previous chapter shows that the best way to answer this question is on three grounds. First, there is the ground of the minister's homiletical theology. How does his own belief about God and what He is doing during the sermon dictate what will be addressed? Second, there is the political theology of the minister's own faith group. How does his tradition view civil matters and the Christian church's response to them? Third, there is the ground of scripture. How does the minister read the scripture when it addresses governments, political powers, and followers of Christ? The summation of these three considerations gives the minister an answer to the question of whether he or she can preach politics ethically.

If ministers satisfactorily determines that they are within their ethical bounds to preach such sermons then their attention must turn to practical matters. Now a minister must ask the following question: "How do I preach a political sermon effectively?" Just because ministers believe they have an ethical right to speak on civil matters from the pulpit that belief does not automatically translate into an effectively communicated sermon. This chapter will discuss sermon effectiveness by examining three categories.

First, the specific tasks associated with constructing a political sermon will be examined. Second, secular and Christian literature that give ministers a deeper understanding of religion and politics and provides a high level of credibility for the preacher will be discussed. And, third, the process of analyzing the contemporary audience will be explored. These three considerations provide a basis upon which ministers can begin to build and deliver effective political sermons. The words of James Boice (1986) concisely and accurately sum up what this chapter will convey to ministers. He writes,

Obviously the sermon is not a lecture. It is an exposition of a text of Scripture in terms of contemporary culture with the specific goal of helping people to understand and obey the truth of God. But to do that well the preacher must be well studied. To do it exceptionally well he must have exceptional understanding of (1) the Scripture he is expounding, (2) the culture into which he is expounding it, and (3) the spirituality and psychology of the people he is helping to obey God's Word. (p.91)

CONSTRUCTING THE POLITICAL SERMON

Ministers, as chapter 2 shows, can have varying ideas when it come to scripture and relating it to political matters. An unnamed Presbyterian minister in 1860 wrote an essay entitled, *Politics and the Pulpit*, in which he identifies the struggle between the various ideas of addressing political matters in a sermon. He writes,

If that Word takes cognizance of man's political relations, and makes them a part of its teachings and injunctions, the pulpit has an official relation to politics, and cannot consistently leave them out of its supervision and its ministrations. But if

the Word of God is silent respecting political duties, or expressly prohibits their consideration, as topics of public instruction or animadversion, then the pulpit must equally be silent. The question is simply a question of divine revelation in the premises. (p. 21)

More recently, Tim J. R. Turner (2009) offered three distinct approaches as they relate to the bible and preaching politics. The depiction of these three approaches is represented in Table 1.

Table 1

Three Approaches to Preaching Politics

Party-political Approach (Partisan)	Biblical-Political Approach (ethical/biblical worldview)	Apolitical Approach (pietistic)
Takes frequent breaks away from consecutive exposition in order to “preach” on historical-socio-political themes.	Maintains a regular diet of consecutive exposition.	Maintains a regular diet of “Gospel texts” or an apractical focus upon Christ (redemptive-historical preaching).
More topical sermons (e.g., roots of America, how evolution came to be taught in schools).	Expository sermons that reference burning contemporary issues as and when demanded by the text or passage of Scripture in view.	Curtails application of the preaching to the gospel (narrowly understood), issues of sanctification, and evangelism.
Typically assumes a political-party perspective- more than not Republican in Euro-American congregations and Democratic in Afro-American or Hispanic congregations.	Allows the Word to speak for itself, both in terms of the range of issues addressed and the manner in which they are touched on. Sometimes the Word favors one party perspective, sometimes another; perhaps both parties; sometimes neither.	Typically makes application of the Word to but a narrow range of spiritual issues.
Often inspires partisan or party-political action.	Ought to inspire a range of ecclesial, evangelistic and socio-political activities, the motivation behind which is the biblical worldview.	Tends to be silent about political action, party-political or otherwise.

The steps in this section outlining the construction of a political sermon can be used for all three of the above approaches. This thesis-project views the middle approach as the most responsible course. The Biblical-political Approach holds the primacy of the scriptures and expository preaching while allowing ministers some latitude in addressing social, civil, and political matters. Therefore, the steps for constructing a political sermon can be incorporated into a minister's on-going sermon development.

When constructing any sermon there are three things that a preacher must absolutely do. Prepare. Prepare. Prepare. It is imperative that the minister is ready to present a well-crafted, well thought out sermon which is engaging, inspiring, and informative. As a warning, J. Alfred Smith (1992) comments that, "Ill-prepared persons preaching about the gospel and social issues can be more deadly and destructive than those timid souls who strive to explain biblical texts without offering any social application" (p. 509).

The preparation undertaken by a preacher for a political sermon differs from other sermons at various points in its methodology. However, literature concerning how to incorporate civil and political material into a sermon is difficult to find. There are a few modern sources which attempt to take a minister from the beginning to the end of sermon preparation but there are not enough of these to compare approaches. In an effort to establish a methodology the following steps for preparing a political sermon have been extracted from various sources.

First, in constructing a political sermon a preacher must approach the scripture in the same manner as any other expository sermon. The key aim in working with the biblical text is to find the exegetical idea of the chosen passage. Stephen D. Matthewson

(2010) writes, “As a preacher of God's Word, your goal is to communicate the ideas in a text and to point out the controlling thought or ‘big idea’” (p. 2). The importance of this step cannot be overstated. Arthur Van Seters (1988) offers a firsthand experience of how a poorly crafted main idea can make scriptural interpretation susceptible to cultural and societal bias:

Some years ago as a visitor for ten consecutive weeks in a large urban church, I heard consistently lucid, graphic preaching. Biblical texts were explained and concretely connected with the daily lives of the members of the congregation. I found myself drawn into the sermons, but gradually I began to feel uneasy.

Something was overriding the ‘hearing of the Word.’ Every biblical text seemed to yield a strangely similar message and that message appeared to be shaped not so much by the text as by a certain ‘sensible’ interpretation of culture. At this point I found myself reflecting on the meaning of the Scripture passages as they had been read earlier in the service and invariably that meaning clashed with what emerged in the sermon. (p. 1)

This step is indispensable for the political sermon because, as with all sermons, it will provide the foundation upon which the preacher builds the message. It gives the preacher strong indications as to the extent to which political and social comments can be made. Therefore, it must always be at the forefront that every passage in the Bible is governed by a single idea. In other words, the passage is relating a concept which the minister must glean through study of the passage, first of all, and, then convey that concept to the congregation.

Dr. Haddon Robinson (1980) says a complete exegetical idea must be made up of a “subject and a complement” (p. 39). Robinson underscores the importance of this step by stating,

Since each paragraph, section, or subsection of Scripture contains an idea, an exegete does not understand a passage until he can state its subject and complement exactly. While other questions emerge in the struggle to understand the meaning of the biblical writer, the two - What is the author talking about? And what is he saying about what he is talking about? – are fundamental. (p. 41)

In order to find the exegetical idea the minister uses the exegetical tools for the political sermon which are common to all expository sermon construction. A full historical, linguistic and grammatical exploration is conducted. Again, the minister will do well to heed the words of Dr. Haddon Robinson (1980) concerning the aim of this study.

Linguistic and grammatical analysis must never be an end in itself, but rather should lead to a clearer understanding of the passage as a whole....Initially the exegete reads the passage and its context in English to understand the author's meaning. Then through analysis he tests his initial impression through an examination of the details. After that he makes a final statement of the subject and complement in light of that study. (p. 66)

Strong sermon preparation begins with this step. A weak exegetical idea produced by weak exegesis will ultimately result in a weak sermon. This is detrimental in political sermons especially when the minister wishes to influence the thinking of parishioners on a crucial political issue. A solid, exact and clear exegetical statement will greatly assist

the minister in every phase of preparation and produce a solid, exact, and clear homiletical statement. Brian Jones (2005) says,

Just as a chef cannot make mashed potatoes out of glue, so the preacher cannot justifiably preach that 'God wants you to have a new boat this summer' from the Noah narrative. There must be a foundational correspondence between the exegetical big idea of the passage and the homiletical big idea of one's sermon. (p. 2)

Second, when constructing a political sermon, if the minister is speaking on a specific issue, he or she must research and study the issue thoroughly. Seasoned researcher Karl Knapp (2007) says, "Research is about asking the right questions, finding the right correlations and investing in the proper tools so that the research is an accurate reflection of reality" (p. 1). The method of this step is to gather as much information from both sides of the issue from credible sources. As Sisk (2008) points out, "It is important that the preacher accurately understands the issue and the arguments that support each side" (p. 90). On this point, speech professor Naomi Rockler-Gladen (2007) writes, "When discussing the other side's point of view, make sure you are accurate. You need to accurately represent their motives and their point of view" (p. 2). At this point in the process, there is no substitute for quality research. A minister must be as deliberate with this study as he or she is with the scriptural groundwork. Outside of the biblical exegesis this step will provide useful material to help explain, prove or apply the big idea of your sermon.

Third, when constructing a political sermon a minister must determine the aim of the sermon. Others refer to this step as establishing the sermon's goal or purpose.

Highlighting the importance of this step, Jesse Hall (2010) writes, “Failure to properly state a purpose and develop the sermon based upon that purpose is one of the primary causes of sermon failures” (para. 1). At this juncture, it is crucial for the minister to decide what exactly the sermon is to accomplish. For instance, Grant Lovejoy (2005) advises that a minister’s aim should be to move people “through the different stages of change” (p. 663). He admits that this will take more than one sermon. A specific topic will have to be periodically revisited.

Sisk (2008), instructs his readers to approach a political sermon with a very narrowly defined goal. He says, “Usually that goal will be to help the congregation understand the issue from a biblical, Christian, church point of view” (p. 88). The benefit of limiting the goal of this type of sermon is it serves to help the preacher steer clear of excessive, political discourse so that the witness of scripture is unhindered.

The fourth step in constructing the political sermon is somewhat related to the previous point but it deserves its own consideration. In this step the minister must determine the role he or she will play in the sermon. Adam Hamilton (2003) asks the question, “What is the most effective way to influence people to reconsider their own views and to move them to adopt a more biblical view” (p. 120)? Partially, this question is answered in the role the minister chooses for the sermon. Grant Lovejoy (2005) insightfully identifies four roles from which a preacher can choose when preaching a political sermon. He writes,

First *principlist*..., who talks about biblical principles....Sermons that remain at this level of abstraction allow the hearers to connect the issue to the principle. The main risk of this approach is the principlist is viewed as irrelevant if the

congregation isn't making the connections between the principle and the specific problem.

Second, the preacher can engage the issue more as an *analyst*. In this case, the sermon serves to pick the issue apart, trying to find the strengths and weaknesses in one approach to the issue. This give people more help in thinking Christianly about the issue but still requires them to think.

Third, the *catalyst* works especially well where there are people in the congregation who understand the issue better than the preacher does. The catalyst lays out general principles but then says, 'Some of you are in a position to act on this. You have specialized knowledge or access to decision-making powers. You can and ought to do something about this.'

The fourth role is that of the *strategist*, who not only knows what the problem is but plans on endorsing a specific course of action. In this mode, it is especially good if you can use the sermon to point people toward a specific ministry within your church or community that addresses the problem. However, when the action called for is in the realm of public policy and legislation, the only real option may involve compromise. When a preacher endorses compromise some may say 'You have left the high idealism of Scripture and become a theological theologizer [*sic*]'. (p. 664)

So the role a preacher plays in a sermon is of critical importance in achieving the intended purpose of the sermon. A minister might choose to experiment by never using the same role in succession to keep the listeners engaged and add balance to the preaching event. Also, a minister may want to attempt to combine two roles together or

mark transitions within the sermon by switching roles. Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix (1999) offer sage advice regarding persuasive techniques which can easily be applied to choosing a role for a political sermon. They say,

The wise preacher will learn to use many of these techniques and will avoid resting his case with a single appeal. The preacher is wasting his time when he attempts to persuade people merely on the basis of obligation or duty. Scolding or entreating will benefit little. If the preacher uses a combination of persuasive techniques, he may be able to help his listeners see and feel for themselves something that is most desirable and worthwhile for their lives. (p. 250)

The fifth step is to actually construct the sermon. All the rules of typical sermon construction apply to the political sermons. There must be an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The sermon must contain crisp and clear transition so that listeners can follow the sermon's unfolding line of thought. John R. W. Stott emphasizes the importance of structure by declaring,

Whether our approach is visual or logical, we still have to organize our thoughts into some structure if they are to be communicable. Just as bones without flesh make a skeleton, so flesh without bones makes a jellyfish. And neither bony skeletons nor jellyfish make good sermons. (pp. 228 – 229)

Bryan Chapell (2005) states,

Listeners more readily grasp ideas that have been formed and pulled together. The fact that a preacher's words are weighty does not mean that listeners will respond to them, especially when the speaker has not managed to bond the ideas together. (p. 45)

It is readily observed, as stated above, that preparation for a political sermon contains many of the same characteristics of expository sermons. In fact, it is imperative that sermons containing political statements are derived solely from the main themes of the scripture being expounded. However, the special considerations listed above must be worked through thoroughly by the minister in order to preach his or her sermon biblically and effectively. The next section moves the minister from the act of constructing the sermon to literature and sources that must inform and shape his or her content.

SECULAR AND CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

While ministers can and, often do, address from the pulpit social and political issues it is always best to rest such statements on a solid biblical, intellectual, and legal foundation. Because so many American are conversant in social, civil, and political affairs it is paramount that the minister be wide-read in these fields before speaking to specific issues. This section seeks to help ministers become familiar with resources which can help lay this foundation.

The first source to consider when preaching politics is within the legal arena. In recent years, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has intensified their enforcement of a 1954 legislation which limited *non-profit* organizations, including churches, from participating in the political process. However, this, in no way, has lessened religion's influence and impact on politics. Sometimes this influence has been detrimental to candidates and leaders. For example, in the 2008 Presidential campaign religion and religious leaders took a prominent place on the political landscape. Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra (2008), writing for *Christianity Today* observes,

While Barak Obama continues to distance himself from the 'incendiary language' of his pastor of 20 years, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, John McCain has renounced anti-Catholic comments made by Texas pastor John Hagee, who endorsed McCain in late February. McCain has also come under criticism for calling Rev. Rod Parsley, who endorses total war against Islam, his 'spiritual guide'. Meanwhile, political essayist Barbara Ehrenreich and others have criticized Hillary Clinton for her affiliation with the Fellowship Foundation's National Prayer Breakfast. (From Blessing to Burden, para. 1)

With religion's increasingly high visibility in American politics the IRS is now scrutinizing anything that resembles political involvement within the church- especially political comments made by a pastor from the pulpit during a worship service.

Of course this scrutiny began before the 2008 campaign. The Boston Globe featured an article on October 27, 2006 entitled, *Clergy Warned on Partisan Preaching: Several Churches Act to Keep Tax Status*. Michael Paulson, writer of the article, cites the origin of the present situation.

The increased concern among religious denominations has been triggered by a highly publicized IRS investigation into All Saints Church, an Episcopal parish in Pasadena, Calif., where a preacher in 2004 mused aloud, in a sermon, about a hypothetical debate between Jesus and the two major-party candidates for president, President George W. Bush and US Senator John F. Kerry. The church is now refusing to comply with a summons for a copy of all written and oral communications identifying candidates for public office in 2004; the IRS, which issued the summons, is investigating whether the sermon, in which the preacher

imagined Jesus criticizing the war in Iraq, constituted illegal advocacy for the Kerry campaign. (para. 6)

Ministers must know the law when it comes to what they can say from the pulpit even if they intend to disregard or disobey it. There are limits to protected speech from the pulpit. Since 2004 many ministers and Christian-based organizations have endeavored to provide guidelines to help ministers decipher the law and the tax code so they are aware of the legal ramifications of their political preaching. Allen R. Bevere (2008) writing for Christianitytoday.com outlined how pastors and churches can legally participate in the political process. He highlights the following ten items:

1. Pastors may personally endorse a candidate. ...The IRS explicitly states that, while a pastor may endorse or oppose a candidate in the parking lot of the church or the local grocery store in conversation, he or she may not directly endorse or oppose a candidate from the pulpit.
2. Pastors may also personally work for a candidate and contribute to his or her campaign.
3. Pastors may even endorse a candidate in print, such as in a newspaper advertisement. The pastor's title and church s/he affiliated with may also be listed for the purposes of identification.
4. Pastors may also preach on moral and social issues (abortion, gay marriage, economic matters, etc.) which, depending on the pastor's views, may by implication throw support behind one candidate over another.
5. Churches may organize voter registrations and drives as long as they are directed at all eligible voters and not only toward voters of one political party.

6. Churches may hold forums where candidates address the issues.
7. If a candidate visits a church during worship, he or she may be introduced publicly.
8. Churches may host candidates to speak from the pulpit, as long as that candidate is not directly endorsed or urges the congregation to vote for him/her.
9. Churches may distribute non-partisan voter guides giving information on where each candidate stands on the issues.
10. Churches may use their premises as voting stations. (pp. 1 – 2)

Ministers who want to read the specific legislation concerning a church's political participation can find it on the Internal Revenue website, www.irs.gov. Also, there are several Christian web pages which offer commentary and guidance on this subject. For instance, the Freedom Forum (www.freedomforum.org) offers convincing insights into why clergy can preach politics. Also, the American Center for Law and Justice (www.aclj.org) is a superb web site for answering questions of legal liability when it comes to preaching politics from the pulpit.

In addition to being conversant on the laws and tax code, there are other types of literature that a minister should be familiar with when it comes to preaching political sermons. For political sermons to be persuasive the minister must be seen as a credible speaker. Secular communication experts know the value of credibility. One instructor for Air Force University writes,

When listening to a message that requires a critical judgment or response, ask yourself, 'Is the speaker a credible source, one who is both an expert on the

subject and one who can be trusted to be honest, unbiased, straightforward?’

Remember that a person may have personality or charisma. But these do not take the place of credibility. A person may even be highly competent and an expert in one area and simply not be informed in another. (Types of Listening, Critical Listening section, para 4)

Ministers must always be competent when expounding the Word of God. But, when it comes to addressing politics from the pulpit, while they may not be classified as an expert, they must convince the audience that they have a competent, working knowledge of the topic they are addressing. There are two categories of sources a minister can consult which will help establish credibility.

The first category of sources which will help the minister in preaching politics are those which give the minister a solid grasp of how religion and politics work together in America. To this end, sources which educate or, re-educate, ministers on the political framework of America should be reviewed. Amy Black (2008), for example, attempts to achieve this goal in her book *Beyond Left and Right: Helping Christians Make Sense of American Politics*. In the chapter entitled, “Who Speaks for God?” Black states her purpose for writing the book. She says,

This book is designed to help you navigate the rocky waters of religion and politics, providing tools and information for addressing questions such as the following: how should Christians respond to this confusing mix of seemingly contradictory views about Christianity and politics? Why does religion seem to cause such division? Should Christians just avoid politics altogether? How should my faith affect my voting decisions and political participation? Instead of offering

one set of definitive answers to these and other questions, the goal of this book is to educate and equip you to answer them for yourself. On this journey, you will learn more about how the American political system works, gaining sights and tools to help you better understand and interact with government. (p.17)

Possibly this can be viewed by some ministers as distracting civics studies.

However, this can be a valuable tool for the minister. Understanding how the American political process works helps preacher better explain to congregants how God can work within our system of government or, in spite of it.

Also, within this category, there are sources which deal with the roles of religion and government from the viewpoint of organizational or “movement” politics within the Church. These works attempt to address the role of religion and government from biblical, historical, or theoretical bases in light of present day political/religious happenings. A past example of “movement politics” within the Christian church is the Moral Majority. Because of its prominence pastors needed to understand the organization. Writers like Richard John Neuhaus (1984) who writes about religion and politics in the wake of the Moral Majority’s rise to notoriety in the United States offers an in-depth analysis of the group’s theological and philosophical basis. He writes,

In the eighth decade of this century a new thing happened that portends, I believe, major changes in American religion and politics. This is not another book on the religious new right, its organizations, personalities, and tactics. My purpose, rather, is to address some of the major questions raised by the phenomenon and by the reactions to it. (p. 5)

The value of this work is it depicts an alternative view of church and state from the standpoint of those who were not within the moral majority camp.

More recently, the Tea Party movement has claimed center spot within the political arena. Heralded as a grassroots movement among citizens who want tax and immigration reform the movement now fosters debate as to whether or not it has underlying religious motives. Mark Silk (2010) writing for Beliefnet.com states,

We know from the polling data that the Tea Party movement includes a disproportionate number of white evangelicals. And while taxes and big government are the manifest motives, virtually all politicians supported by the movement are on board with the agenda of the religious right. (para. 2)

Religion has enormous potential to impact the political climate of America so that the ripple effect is experienced throughout the culture. A minister might choose to comment on such movements and organizations from the pulpit. It is a good discipline to expose oneself to the thinking of writers for and against such political uprisings that often begin as grassroots movements within the Church. For this, he or she should seek out sources like the ones above to help better understand the events or movements from differing perspectives.

Another author who deals with the relationship between church and state is Jim Wallis. Wallis, the founder of *Sojourners* magazine, has written extensively about faith, politics and culture. In the *Soul of Politics: Beyond Religious Right and Secular Left*, Wallis (1994) explores the relationship of religion and politics and calls for a deeper integration of the two. If it is true that Christians want to know how to have their faith

influence their political participation then books like this will help ministers better formulate ideas to guide congregants to do this. Wallis says of this book,

The *Soul of Politics* seeks to address the spiritual center and the moral heart of political discourse. My contention is we will not get very far in developing new policy directions until we deal with ethical issues. I am writing not just to liberals or conservatives; I am writing to anyone- left, right, or in between- who believes that we need a new political conversation. Neither am I writing only to religious people; this book is for anyone who longs for a new political vision with real moral values. (p. xiv)

Shane Claiborne and Chris Haw are arguably the most radical thinkers in the protestant church when it comes to religion and government. Preachers who want to get a dose of a truly extreme view of Christianity and culture should read their book, *Jesus for President*. This book traces Christianity from its early roots to the way it interacts with government in its present form. Its pronouncement of American culture and Christianity are both sobering and troubling. For instance in a footnote they write,

The essence of this book is not dependent on whether the United States is truly a prideful empire. Christianity proclaims an alternate allegiance even to citizens of humble nations. And the point is certainly not that only the United States is one of the beastly powers. Among Russia, China, Rwanda, Belgium and countless others, it would be quite a competition as to which dictatorship tops the most blood shed and worst publicly legitimated insanity. But to see the bad fruits of power is an important connection to make for those who have a white-knuckle grip on both the cross and the flag. When we take a good look at the United States, we must

face the reality that the United States is not, as Barak Obama (and countless others) said, “the last great hope for humanity.” This is not only false according to the standards of history but also heretical for us in the church. This is the kind of stuff that made John of Patmos seethe (not to mention God). And in the scope of history the United States is a young project that doubtlessly will fall- whether in a few or in many years. (Claiborne and Hall, 2008, p. 182)

In a CNN interview with Eric Marrapodi and Kate Bolduan (2008) Claiborne said,

This is not about going left or right, this is about going deeper and trying to understand together. Rather than endorse candidates, we ask them to endorse what is at the heart of Jesus and that is the poor or the peacemakers and when we see that then we'll get behind them. (CNN Politics.comm, para. 5)

Whether a minister agrees with the comments and conclusions of these two writers, it is a must for ministers to read from such sources especially since young, evangelical Christians gravitate to the ideas of church and state as presented by Claiborne.

The second category of literature that helps ministers develop credible political sermons are those sources that deal with specific policy issues. These works may contain theological and theoretical discussions but they are predominantly issue oriented. They discuss social topics like war, poverty, economics, marriage, etc. from the perspective of the author. These sources are indispensable reading for the preacher when he or she finds it necessary to address, from the pulpit, a specific governmental or social policy issue. Many times the authors of these sources have already done much of the in-depth research needed to speak credibly about the topic.

The secular sources which are easiest to access are from the political parties themselves. Republican, Democratic, Libertarian, etc. all have national party websites which explain social policies from their particular party's perspective or ideology. Since most congregants identify with a particular political party it would be wise to, at least, know the specific positions which are held on the various issues. This information is not to be used to demonize one party and praise another. Instead, it is to give the preacher an understanding of how the parties approach the issue.

In recent decades many Christian writers have focused their energies on making sure that readers understand the various social policies enacted or being proposed. They also include commentary on how Christians should think about and respond to such policies. Just as with secular sources these Christian sources reflect the theological persuasion, or bias, of the writer.

The Christian church has many writers that are identified with the conservative, evangelical perspective. D. James Kennedy (2008) is one such author who has written prolifically and preached extensively about social issues and policies. In *How Would Jesus Vote? A Christian Perspective on the Issues*, he and co-author Jerry Newcombe delve into the different policies and issues which they deem as important for Christians to know. Kennedy boldly states the purpose of his book,

Is to explore those biblical principles from which we can draw political implications. Does the Bible say anything about how we are to educate our young? Does it say anything about abortion or capital punishment? Does it say anything about war or how we are to vote on the environment, immigration or health care? (p. 10)

Kennedy and Newcombe go on to say, "People will disagree about how Christian morality should inform public policy. But knowing that political views always derive from an internal morality, we must make it our duty to declare what we believe. (p. 21)

Books like Kennedy's are not bashful in directing how Christians are to respond to social policies. Pastors should be aware that these types of books encourage a high level of activism among church and pastors when it comes to reforming social policy or having the government adopt new ones.

Ronald J. Sider and Diane Knippers (2005) have teamed up as editors to produce what appears to be the most comprehensive attempt by evangelicals to tackle the full-range of policy issues confronting the United States today. Their book, *Toward an Evangelical Public Policy*, seeks to establish a framework providing Christians with guidance for political involvement. Siders, the president of Evangelicals for Social Action and Knippers, the president of the Institute for Religion and Democracy, have brought together twenty-one experts on social issues to help formulate an evangelical political methodology. Should anyone wonder as to the aim of this work Sider and Knippers boldly state it in the final chapter. The editors call for a deeper social commitment from evangelicals when it comes to influencing social policy. They state the following:

We commit ourselves to support Christians who engage in political and social action in a manner consistent with biblical teachings. We call Christian leaders in public office or with expertise in public policy and political life to help us deepen our perspective on public policy and political life so that we might better fulfill our civic responsibilities.

We call on all Christians to become informed and then vote, as well as to regularly communicate biblical values to their governmental representatives. We urge all Christians to take their civic responsibilities seriously even when they are not full-time political activists so that they might more adequately call those in government to their task. We also encourage our children to consider vocations in public service. (p. 375)

Sider and Knippers' work is helpful for pastors because it thoroughly attaches policy issues and policy reform with a system that adheres to the best principles of the evangelical movement. Works like this help pastors think more strategically about how the church can make a lasting impact when it comes to public policy issues.

An alternative to the conservative, evangelical approach to policy issues and reform is found in sources like that of Adam Hamilton (2008) author of *Seeing Grey in a World of Black and White*. Hamilton, the pastor of a 14,000 member United Methodist Church in Leawood, Kansas, believes that nothing about the issues we face is black or white instead truth resides on all sides of the issue. To prove his point he notes,

As many Christian are drawn to a centered or balanced faith, there is an increasing frustration with the role Christianity has played in the culture wars. Too often faith has been used by Christian leaders and politicians to further a particular political party or political agenda. And in the minds of many non-religious people in America, Christianity is not associated with love or grace or justice, but with a particular view of homosexuality, or a particular stance on abortion, or a seemingly absurd or anti-intellectual view of human origins. (p. xv)

He goes on to say,

There are growing numbers of Christians who believe the gospel calls us to be healers and bridge builders, not dividers. There are new calls to civility in how Christians dialogue and debate ethical and political issues. And there are many Christians who are coming to see that even on important ethical issues of our time there may be a need for a different approach than has been taken in the last thirty years. (p. xvi)

Hamilton's book attempts to explore specific social policy issues from the standpoint of finding agreement rather than drawing battle lines between opposing views. Of course, those pastors who see opposing viewpoints on some issues as being mutually exclusive will have trouble with Hamilton's approach. However, it is a thoughtful source from a mainline tradition.

Finally, Jim Wallis' (2005) *God's Politics: When the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* is a great source for specific policy issues from an evangelical perspective. The title of his book gives away the author's purpose. Rejecting both party's positions Wallis seeks to develop within his readers a new understanding and approach to the public policy issues Americans must address. He comments,

The 'religious issues' in an election get reduced to the Ten Commandments in public courthouses, gay-marriage amendments, prayer in schools, and, of course, abortion. These issues are important. But faith informs policy in other areas as well. What about the biblical imperatives for social justice, the God who lifts up the poor, the Jesus who said, 'Blessed are the peacemaker'? How a candidate deals with poverty is a religious issue.... Neglect of the environment is a religious

issue. Fighting preemptive and unilateral wars based on false claims is a religious issue (a fact not changed by the defeat and capture of Saddam Hussein). (p. 58)

While this section can never present all the literary sources which deal with politics and religion those that have been presented here are types of sources which will help prepare a minister for the task of preaching political sermons. Ministers need resources that help them understand America's governmental structures and how religion is intended to fit within them. Also, preachers need sources that deal with specific policy issues from both secular and religious perspectives in order to speak to congregants with knowledge and wisdom that translates into credibility.

A library full of relevant resources is a must in order for a minister to gain the necessary insights for preaching political sermons but that is not the final consideration. The last thing that a minister who intends to incorporate political comments within the sermon must do is analyze the audience to which he or she will be speaking. Consideration of the people who will sit before a minister on Sunday is of the utmost importance. To know the people results in effective communication. The following section will present resources for helping ministers achieve this goal.

ANALYZING THE CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE

In a previous section within this chapter, research was identified as a major step in preparing to preach a political sermon. The research spoken of above deals with specific details about a political or social issue upon which the pastor chooses to preach. However, there is other research which must be done that moves away from the specific issues and focuses upon those who will hear the message and the culture within which they hear it.

Ministers never preach to vacant minds or in a cultural vacuum. Therefore, analyzing the contemporary audience is a key factor for effective, successful preaching. John Stott (1982) reminds readers that, “Biblical and theological studies do not by themselves make for good preaching. They are indispensable. But unless they are supplemented by contemporary studies, they can keep us disastrously isolated on one side of the cultural chasm” (p.190). John Koessler echoes this sentiment by stating, “This means if we hope to be understood by our listeners, we must analyze the audience as carefully as we analyze the text” (p. 179).

Regardless of its importance, it is possible that analyzing the contemporary audience is a task many ministers are not prepared to tackle with a high degree of competence or confidence. This might be due to the lack of formal training the minister has received concerning audience analysis. William E. Hull (1992) writes the following about such training:

A major problem arises from the neglect of this agenda in the training of preachers. Most seminaries offer no in-depth study of contemporary life anywhere in the theological curriculum. Standard textbooks on homiletics are largely silent on strategy questions of how to engage the modern mind with the gospel. The wider literature on preaching in books and journals may contain a few scattered references of an inspirational or hortatory nature but very little solid analysis of the current *Zeitgeist*. Nor do continuing education workshops on preaching devote any significant attention to this issue. In my judgment, the single weakest link in present efforts to equip ministers to preach is the almost complete lack of

resources to help them understand the world to which they will witness. (pp. 574 – 575)

While Hull's view is somewhat bleak when it comes to the formal training of preachers, John S. McClure (2007) offers a more current, positive view while offering a definition of audience analysis. He points out that,

Over the past two decades, congregational study has become an important practical theological discipline. Congregational study is the semiotic and ethnographic analysis of the signs and symbols that define both the atmosphere (tone, character, style, mood) of a congregation and its worldview (metanarrative, reality picture). (p. 16)

As a further description, Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (1997) says,

The task of congregational exegesis is a 'microscopic' one, involving attention to the very local actions and idioms of congregational life. And the task is an open-ended one, as the quest for meaning carries pastors into the ever-deepening waters of congregational life with its shifting tides and currents. (p. 60)

Whether or not a minister received formal training in analyzing a contemporary audience or not is not the key factor for relevant and effective communication with a congregation. Certainly, there are those who have received such training yet never use the tools they possess. Others, without formal training have learned throughout their tenures as preachers how to know their people and the culture to which they speak and arrange their messages with these in mind.

When preaching political sermons or addressing social issues it is imperative for the minister to engage in an analysis of both the local congregation and the culture at

large in order to know how to craft the sermon's content and delivery so it reaches the listeners for which it is intended and can make the desired impact. The following is a guide to help ministers in this task.

The first step in analyzing the contemporary culture is to begin with the people of the local congregation. Since they are the ones who will hear the sermon they are the logical place to begin. On this point, John R. W. Stott (1982) affirms people as our starting point and our task as observers. He says,

I am glad for this emphasis that our study of the modern world begins with people, not books. The best preachers are always diligent pastors, who know the people of their district and congregation and understand the human scene with all its pain, pleasure, glory and tragedy. And the quickest way to gain such an understanding is to shut our mouth (a hard task for compulsive preachers) and open our eyes and ears. (p. 192)

Concurring with the above statement, John F. Bettler (1986) says, "Good preachers know and maintain contact with their people. They know and work with the people close enough that they appreciate their doubts, fears, hurts, and joys. A good preacher must be a people person" (p. 347).

Likewise, J. Peter Vosteen (1986) writes,

It is absolutely imperative that the minister of God's Word have intimate contact with the people whom he serves. He must know their hopes, their desires, their dreams, their failures, their sins. He must be acquainted with their work and their recreation. The closer he gets to them in all aspects of their lives, the more real will be God's message as applied to their needs. (p. 407)

If people are to be the preacher's beginning point in audience analysis then there must be some system, some procedure, for uncovering the important facts about them. Along this line, Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (1997) author of *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* offers seven fields of observation from which a minister can begin a proper exegesis of a congregation. All of these fields have value for preaching political sermons because they all can reveal, in some way, the attitudes and actions of the congregation toward civil and political matters. These fields are as follows:

1. Stories- "Indeed there are probably no more fruitful 'texts' for analyzing congregational subcultures than the narratives participants in congregational life share with the pastor in the ordinary process of carrying on ministry."
2. Interviews- "Interviews, whether formal or informal, conducted with individuals or with groups, can be culture texts, disclosive of congregational identity and social change."
3. Archival Materials- "While some congregations have more formal systems of filing and preserving archival materials than others, nearly every congregation has a box, cabinet, or file drawer that contains materials that have been deemed worthy of preservation, and that holds something of the memory of congregational life."
4. Demographics- "While such statistics provide only a superficial description...they nevertheless do provide valuable information about congregational identity and how it is formed. A congregation's worldview and character are shaped by who is or who isn't included in congregational life."

5. Architecture and visual art- “The quest is not simply descriptive. What deeper meanings can be gleaned about the particular worldview, character, and ethos of this congregation by observing the art and space of that building it calls ‘home’?”
6. Rituals- “Rituals not only provide sources for discovering what congregational identity is; they also provide opportunities to probe and explore what it is becoming.”
7. Events and Activities- “Theoretically, any event in congregational life has potential to become a ‘cultural text’ - particularly those activities that hold special meaning and value for members of that congregation.
8. People- “In nearly every congregation there are respected figures who, in their very beings, symbolically personify the ideals of that congregation....By observing these sages, a student of congregational culture can learn much more about what a congregation values....Alternatively, there also exists in congregational life people who live ‘on the margins’. If attending to the sages can tell a pastor what is valued in a congregation, attending to those on the margins can give a signal as to where the cultural boundary lines lie that separates ‘us’ from ‘not us’.” (Chapter 3, Exegeting the Congregation, pp. 65 – 77)

In the same book Tisdale (2007) points out that congregational analysis also involves examining the congregation’s worldview and values. In regard to discovering the member’s view on society she offers some poignant questions for the minister to ask. She poses such questions as,

- *Using H. Richard Niebuhr's categories in Christ and Culture, if you were going to locate the congregation's understanding of itself in relation to the larger culture, how would you characterize it? (See the review of Christ and Culture in Appendix B)*
- *Would the congregation's mission orientation best be characterized as:*
 - a. *activist* (with strong emphasis on the congregation's own corporate address of social, political, and economic issues),
 - b. *civic* (encouraging church groups to study public issues and encouraging individuals to become involved, while avoiding corporate stands as a church body),
 - c. *evangelistic* (with primary emphasis upon the call of individuals to salvation and eternal life), or
 - d. *sanctuary* (providing a place in which its participants can withdraw from the trials of societal life and find a safe haven)?
- *Would the congregation's own self-image for social ministry best be described as:*
 - a. *Survivor church* (reactive to the crises of an overwhelming world);
 - b. *Crusader church* (proactive in seeking out issues and championing causes);
 - c. *Pillar church* (anchor in its community and taking responsibility for the community's well-being);
 - d. *Pilgrim church* (caring for immigrants with ethnic, national, or racial roots)

e. *Servant church* (caring for and supporting individuals in need)? (View of Christian Mission, p. 84)

A minister can examine these fields and ask these questions looking for clues as to the political involvement of the congregation. These findings can render a wealth of information and can be indicators as to the place politics and social issues assumes in congregational life.

Haddon Robinson (2005) in the *Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching* offers another approach for exegeting the congregation that can prove beneficial for preachers. He says,

I prepare my sermons using a life situation grid. Across the top of the grid, I label columns for men, women, singles, married, divorced, those living together. On the side of the grid I have rows of different age groups (youth, youth-adult, middle-age, elderly), professional groups (the unemployed, the self-employed, workers, and management), levels of faith (committed Christians, doubters, cynics, and atheists), the sick and the healthy, to name a few. After I've researched my biblical text and developed my ideas, I wander around the grid, looking for two to four intersections where the message will be especially relevant. (Preaching to Everyone In Particular, p. 117)

Dr. Robinson uses this grid for preparing every sermon but it can prove especially helpful when a pastor is planning to address a political or social issue within his sermon. Actively thinking through the different types of people and groups present during the service can make the pastor more thoughtful about what he or she wants to convey and more deliberate in how it is said. However, instead of looking where groups intersect, the

pastor will need to consider each group's perspective and experience on the particular issue being addressed to find the points where the different groups diverge.

In addition to analyzing the people of the local church the minister will do well to broaden his or her analysis to the culture at large. Studying the culture with the intent of understanding the political and social landscape is the next step. This is worthwhile because the political and social dialogue present within the larger culture will present itself, somehow, within the congregation. There are numerous resources available to help ministers with this task.

One of the most valuable resources for ministers is the website for the Pew Forum for Religion and Public Life which is a project of the Pew Research Center. As its website explains,

The Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, launched in 2001, seeks to promote a deeper understanding of issues at the intersection of religion and public affairs. The Pew Forum conducts surveys, demographic analyses and other social science research on important aspects of religion and public life in the U.S. and around the world. It also provides a neutral venue for discussions of timely issues through roundtables and briefings. (About Pew Forum section, n.d., para. 1 & 2)

This website is full of helpful material on everything from abortion to social welfare. Ministers can use this site to study religion and politics from a topical, religious practice, religious affiliation or demographic perspective. The reason this is such an extensive site is because The Pew Research Center realizes and acknowledges the place religion holds in society. It states,

The U.S. has a long tradition of separating church and state, yet a powerful inclination to mix religion and politics. Throughout the nation's history, political and social movements- from abolition to women's suffrage to civil rights- have drawn upon religious institutions for moral authority, inspirational leadership and organizational muscle. In recent years, religion has been woven more deeply into the fabric of partisan politics than ever before. (Politics & Elections section, n.d., Introduction)

An example of Pew's vast research capabilities is seen in the longitudinal study of the American voter's attitude towards mixing religion and politics. A somewhat startling result from this study was published by the forum in 2008 claiming that a shift in thinking had taken place in the minds of many Americans. In an overview of the study's findings it reads,

Some Americans are having a change of heart about mixing religion and politics.... For a decade majorities of Americans had voiced support for religious institutions speaking out on social and political matters....Four years ago, just 30% of conservatives believed that churches should stay out of politics. Today, 50% of conservatives express this view. (Overview section, para. 1 &2)

Another resource which is helpful in understanding the world in which the minister lives are the various websites dedicated to the observation and reporting of cultural happenings from a Christian viewpoint. These websites are not highly analytical like that of the Pew Forum, Instead, they, in blog fashion, convey to their subscribers the trends of the popular culture.

One such site is Dick Staub. Com. The title of his webpage is *CultureWatch*. In a description about the website it says, “CultureWatch offers Dick Staub’s daily commentary on movies, music, books and news stories ‘where belief meets real life’” (About CultureWatch, n.d. para 1). While this site and sites like it are not specifically dedicated to politics and religion it does provide signals to a minister as to the culture biases regarding politics and social issues.

If ministers choose to do their own research on the culture at large and reach conclusions independent of others there are many avenues to achieve this. John R.W. Stott (1982) outlines several. He says,

I take it for granted that...we shall read a daily or weekly newspaper...watch some television, and pursue the secular book reviews in order to discover the most influential contemporary books to get and read. It seems clear that we shall also find it necessary to see some of the most notable films and plays, since nothing mirrors contemporary society more faithfully than the stage and the screen. (p. 193)

Along this line, periodicals and journals are also helpful in analyzing the American culture in a broad sense. Christian magazines which stay up with current trends and report on them in a timely manner are indispensable in helping a preacher understand the task of preaching to this culture. *Christianity Today (CT)* is one of the best periodical for this. Because of its sizable reporting base, this magazine stays current and provides information and insight on the national and international scene.

Political and social issues are areas where CT makes a big contribution to increasing reader awareness about religion and politics. For instance in the months

leading up to the 2008 elections CT offered such articles as “How to Pick a President”, “Voting like It Matters”, “Evangelical Moderates”, “American (and More Evangelicals) Want Churches Out of Politics” and “What We Really Want”. Although some conservatives within the evangelical community view CT as a moderate voice, it is hard to find a Christian publication with more in-depth and comprehensive coverage.

Sermon Surveys are the final sources for helping a preacher exegete his congregation and the larger church culture. Surveys and feedback can be conducted formally and informally in a local congregation. Also, ministers can consult published, more in-depth, statistical surveys to gain understanding of congregant attitudes towards politics and social issues during the sermon.

Dr. Lori Carrell (2000) published *The Great American Sermon Survey*. For this book, Dr. Carrell surveyed 581 preachers and 479 listeners. These people represented a wide-variety of faith groups. They were asked a series of questions about sermons that they either heard or have preached. The findings in this book are very informative.

A most revealing question in this book was “If you could get one message across to all preachers in America what would it be?” (p.95). The number one response concerned relevancy which had definite implications for political preaching. Dr. Carrell writes,

Thirty-six percent of the listeners advise preachers regarding their content; most of all, they want a relevant message with clear ties to Scripture. They also urge preachers to have God-centered messages, God-directed messages, and challenging messages. They advise the preacher not to ‘pound’ - literally and figuratively. (p. 95)

Comments include:

- 'I keep hearing about the pro-life issues, there is no mention of how we can show Christ's compassion in practical ways- for the quality of life- to the already living babies and children who are abused, neglected, or hungry. Then when they grow up in the welfare system, we'll blame them for not being hard workers in this land of opportunity.'
- 'Don't allow personal gripes or pet peeves to be the focus of the sermon. It's so whiny.'
- 'We put a lot of stock in what you say. Be sure it's Biblical and God-directed.'
- 'The demoralization of America, the lying president, the use of abortion as birth control- we know and we are not rooting for it. We're on the same side; why do you seem to preach against us? I don't need to be put down over and over. My problems are about how to love my neighbor, raise my kids, and get through bad times.' (pp. 96 - 97)

Dr. Carrell's surveys, and surveys like it, do not correspond with the attitudes of every member of every church. Local churches can vary in their attitudes about sermons containing political statements. Some might be highly permissive, even encouraging, of such content. Others could be less tolerant of such uses of the pulpit. The value of surveys like this is it allows the minister to consider perspectives about the content of his or her preaching before he or she stands in front of the congregation. It confronts the minister with the reality of whether the congregation is tolerant of political content within the sermon and how forceful should he or she be in its presentation.

CONCLUSION

Chapter three has explored political preaching from its practical and technical aspects. A minister can have sound theology and homiletical license to focus sermons upon civil and social issues. If that is established firmly then strong consideration must be given to the sermon's development and the audience who will hear it. Therefore, this section has examined actual development of a political sermon. It has reinforced the necessity of "Big Idea" preaching and the steps that go into formulating an effective political sermon. Second, this section mentioned some types of literature that a minister should reference when developing this kind of sermon. And, finally, this chapter focused upon audience analysis. It offered several ideas for exegeting not only the local congregation but the broader culture in order to attain awareness of the attitudes concerning religion and politics which might be present within the congregation.

Brian Lowery (2008) said, "...preachers are forced to decide how, and if, they will address controversial issues. That is a daunting task, particularly when people within the church differ on how biblical teaching applies politically" (para. 1). It is with this fact in mind that this thesis-project seeks to advise preachers on political and social sermons in order to remain biblical and effective in content and delivery.

CHAPTER FOUR

LESSON PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Christian church in the United States finds itself in a continual debate as to its involvement in civil politics. Periodically, this debate receives fresh fuel specifically in an election year where, usually, candidates try to capture the “religious” voting base. Many churches are centers of political activism organizing protests, voter registrations, and issue-based forums. This invites not only scrutiny from those outside the church but strong opinions as to the place religion should hold on the political landscape. While this debate will undoubtedly rage on throughout this country’s existence Christians are challenged with figuring out exactly what role their faith must play in their own personal political involvement. Christians cannot compartmentalize their faith to the point it has no impact on which candidate they elect, how they view issues, and how they participate in the political process.

A major source upon which many Christians rely for deciphering this dilemma is the minister and his sermons. Therefore, the sessions in this lesson plan are designed to equip the minister with theological, biblical, and practical tools for devising, developing, and delivering a political sermon so that such sermons will be preached ethically and effectively. First, special emphasis will be paid to homiletical theology and the political theologies of different faith groups. Second, biblical and secular sources will be covered which provide content to the sermon. Third, actual construction of the political sermon will be discussed.

SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL PREACHING

Overview: This session establishes the foundation for the course. Terms are defined and the topic of political preaching is connected to the larger task of expository preaching.

Objective: Explain what political preaching is, how it relates to expository preaching, and its importance.

- Begin by introducing the course. **(Slide 1)**
- Present the course objectives. **(Slide 2)**
 1. Explain what Political Preaching is, how it relates to expository preaching, and its importance.
 2. Know the theological and exegetical basis for political sermons.
 3. Know how to construct a sermon that incorporates political comments.

Introduction to Session 1

A. Introduce the scope of session one by discussing the specific details to be covered during this session. **(Slide 3)**

B. Questions?

I. Objective one. Explain what Political Preaching is, how it relates to expository preaching, and its importance.

A. Introduce the Political Preaching by performing the following:

- State the below session goals.
 1. Know what political preaching is.
 2. State the driving force and the pitfall of political sermons.
 3. State the five reasons for political sermons.

- Next, use DVD clips of various preachers in the pulpit making political comments during sermons or, read excerpts of political comments from sermon manuscripts of various preachers.

Note: (These materials are not supplied. The instructor is responsible for their creation.)

- Ask the students to use the material they have just seen or heard to describe this type of preaching?
- Ask students to give their reactions to that type of preaching?
- Give the students the working definition which is to be the guide for this class. **(Slide 4)**
- Give the three (3) features of this type of preaching are: - **(Slide 5)**

B. Explain how Political Preaching relates to Expository Preaching by performing the following:

- Ask students if they have ever heard a sermon where a minister preached on a political issue and you had question about the biblical foundation for the comments that were made?
- Show slide of John Knox quote. **(Slide 6)**

“It is possible to preach a quite unbiblical sermon on a biblical text; it is also possible to preach a biblical sermon on no text at all.”
- Read this quote from Adam Hamilton and ask for responses.

“There are many ways we might misuse God’s name but among these is making statements about God that God himself would reject. I believe the terrorist who invoke God’s name before killing innocent people is one clear example. But so, too, are the many things pastors and preachers say about God, with utter confidence, but which God might find the antithesis of his heart and Character.” (Hamilton, 2008, p. 16)
- Tell students when ministers preach on political issues it is imperative that they make sure that the scripture from which their comments are made is accurately interpreted and applied. Expository

preaching is the driving force behind the political sermon. It is the one mode of preaching that emphasizes strict adherence to the text.

- Show definition of expository preaching? **(Slide 7)**

C. Ask students why politics and preaching is an important study?

- Give the five reasons a study such as this is of benefit to preachers.
 1. Expository preaching is still the dominant approach for preaching biblical truth. **(Slide 8)**
 2. Americans' attitude about mixing religion and politics. **(Slide 9)**
 3. Christians must know how to think biblically about political issues. **(Slide 10)**
 4. Many political issues are moral issues. **(Slide 11)**
 5. Preachers must be balanced in their preaching. **(Slide 12)**
- Give students the assignment to think back 6 months from now and note how many sermons they preached which addressed political issues in some form?
- Ask students if they think they have a proper balance in their preaching schedule?

SESSION 2 THE THEOLOGICAL AND EXEGETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Overview: This session explores the various theologies and biblical passages necessary for ethical and effective preaching of political sermons.

Objective: Know the theological and exegetical basis for political sermons.

- II. Objective Two: Know the theological and exegetical basis for political sermons.

(Slide 13)

A. Introduce session by briefly reviewing last session's material and stating the overview of this section. State that this session is designed to establish a theological and biblical foundation upon which student can develop and deliver political sermons ethically and effectively. **(Slide 14)**

- Tell the students that by the end of this session students will have:

(Slide 15)

1. Explored 4 homiletical theologies.
2. Examined the basic tenets of the political theologies of various faith groups.
3. Related biblical principles to the task of preaching political sermons.

B. Explore homiletical and faith group theologies.

- Begin by asking the students why theology is important for preachers?
- After discussion show Stott quote. "Techniques can only make us orators; if we want to be preachers, theology is what is needed" (Stott, 1982, p.92). **(Slide 16)**
- Tell students that preaching without giving due consideration to biblical theology is tantamount to navigating an ocean without a compass. We will be lost, having no idea where we have been or where we are going or how to get to there. State the two types of theologies that will be discussed.

C. Tell students that the homiletical theology of a minister is the first consideration for political preaching.

- Begin by asking students the following:

Why do you preach? What gives you the right to stand before people and tell them you speak for God? What is God doing when you preach?

Explain to students that when they begin to answer such questions they are stating the theological grounds for their preaching.

- State the general characteristics of homiletical theologies (**Slide 17**)
 1. Asserts that God spoke and he still speaks.
 2. They are Christological
 3. They are Trinitarian seeing the entire God-head's involvement within the preaching event.
- Use John S. McClure material and highlight the 4 theologies. Use the material in chapter two to give students the characteristics of each theology and the implications for political preaching. (**Slides 18**)
 1. Existential Theology
 2. Transcendental Theology
 3. Ethical-Political Theology
 4. Organic-Aesthetic Theology
- Give students the assignment of using at least one of these theological approaches as a starting point for preaching write your own homiletical theology.

D. Tell students the second type of theology to consider is a specific faith group's political theology.

- Show slide and give handout. Get response to the following:
"Theological traditions create frameworks that help us interpret and clarify biblical truth" (p.144). (**Slide 19 and Handout**)

- Present slides highlighting the following faith groups. Consult chapter two for more supporting material on each theology. **(Slides 20 – 28)**
 1. Catholic Political Theology
 2. Anabaptist Political Theology
 3. Lutheran Political Theology
 4. Reformed Political Theology
 5. Mainline Protestant Political Theology
 6. Southern Baptist Political Theology
 7. Holiness Denomination Political Theology
- Give students the assignment of outlining the political theology of their own faith groups using the above discussion as a guide. They must state whether or not they agree with their faith group's political theology.

E. The exegetical basis for political sermons

- Begin by asking students if they have ever heard a minister make a statement during a sermon and wondered how it related to his chosen text? Ask them what they thought about the sermon and the minister?
- Tell the students that if a minister is to stand before congregants and speak for God on issues of government then ministers must not only be sure of their personal homiletical theology and be familiar with their denomination's political theology but he or she must know what provisions the Bible makes for such content.
- Direct students to handouts in Appendix and state the three passages the class will examine are Matthew 5: 13 – 16, Matthew 22: 15 - 22, and Romans 13: 1 – 6. Be sure and remind the students that both those who support political involvement by the church and those who are against it use these three scriptures as justification for their

position. Therefore, interpretation of these verses is a crucial matter. The conclusions reached by the preacher are foundational for what assertions and statements are made.

- Examine the passages – Work through each passage using the material from chapter two and the handouts to guide the class participation and discussion.
 1. Matthew 5: 13 – 16
 2. Matthew 22: 15 – 22
 3. Romans 13: 1 – 6
- Assign 1 Peter 2: 13 – 17 to the students for homework. After exegeting the passage they are to explain how it relates to faith and civil life.

SESSION 3 CONSTRUCTING THE POLITICAL SERMON (Slide 29)

Overview: This session explores the five steps necessary for constructing political sermons.

Objective: Know how to construct a sermon that incorporates political comments.

III. Objective three. Know how to construct a sermon that incorporates political comments.

- Begin by saying if a minister satisfactorily determines that he or she is within their ethical bounds to preach political sermons then the minister must turn his or her attention to practical matters. Now the minister must ask the following question: “How do I preach a political sermon effectively?”
- Tell students that by the end of this session they will: **(Slide 30)**
 1. Know the basic elements in constructing a political sermon.
 2. Construct a library of resources to aid in the development of political sermons.
 3. Evaluate and determine the political attitudes of the local congregation and the larger popular culture.

- A. Highlight for students the three approaches to scripture and politics in Table 1. Be sure and tell the student this course is based upon the middle approach.
(Slide 31 & Handout)

Table 1

Three Approaches to Preaching Politics

Party-political Approach (Partisan)	Biblical-political Approach (ethical/biblical worldview)	Apolitical Approach (pietistic)
Takes frequent breaks away from consecutive exposition in order to “preach” on historical-socio-political themes.	Maintains a regular diet of consecutive exposition.	Maintains a regular diet of “Gospel texts” or an apractical focus upon Christ (redemptive-historical preaching).
More topical sermons (e.g., roots of America, how evolution came to be taught in schools).	Expository sermons that reference burning contemporary issues as and when demanded by the text or passage of Scripture in view.	Curtails application of the preaching to the gospel (narrowly understood), issues of sanctification, and evangelism.
Typically assumes a political-party perspective—more than not Republican in Euro-American congregations and Democratic in Afro-American or Hispanic congregations.	Allows the Word to speak for itself, both in terms of the range of issues addressed and the manner in which they are touched on. Sometimes the Word favors one party perspective, sometimes another; perhaps both parties; sometimes neither.	Typically makes application of the Word to but a narrow range of spiritual issues.
Often inspires partisan or party-political action.	Ought to inspire a range of ecclesial, evangelistic and socio-political activities, the motivation behind which is the biblical worldview.	Tends to be silent about political action, party-political or otherwise.

B. The steps for constructing a political sermon.

1. Find the “Big Idea” of the sermon.

- Tell the students that in constructing a political sermon a preacher must approach the scripture in the same manner as any other expository sermon. The key aim in working with the biblical text is to find the exegetical idea of the chosen passage. **(Slide 32)**

2. Research the issue thoroughly. **(Slide 33)**

- At this point in the process, there is no substitute for quality research. A minister must be as deliberate with this study as he or she is with the scriptural groundwork. Outside of the biblical exegesis this step will provide useful material to help explain, prove or apply the big idea of your sermon.

3. Decide the aim of the sermon. **(Slide 34)**

4. Determine the role he or she will play in the sermon. **(Slides 35 – 37)**

- *principiist*..., who talks about biblical principles....Sermons that remain at this level of abstraction allow the hearers to connect the issue to the principle. The main risk of this approach is the principiist is viewed as irrelevant if the congregation isn't making the connections between the principle and the specific problem.
- *analyst*. In this case, the sermon serves to pick the issue apart, trying to find the strengths and weaknesses in one approach to the issue. This give people more help in thinking christianly about the issue but still requires them to think.
- *catalyst* works especially well where there are people in the congregation who understand the issue better than the preacher does. The catalyst lays out general principles but then says, 'Some of you are in a position to act on this. You have specialized knowledge or access to decision-making powers. You can and ought to, do something about this.'
- *strategist*, who not only knows what the problem is but plans on endorsing a specific course of action. In this mode, it is especially good if you can use the sermon to point people toward a specific ministry with your church or community that addresses the problem.

5. Construct the sermon. **(Slide 38)**

- **Assignment:** Find three printed sermons which deal with a social/political issue. Identify and evaluate the minister's effective use of the above categories.

C. Constructing a library of resources for political sermons.

- This section seeks to help ministers become familiar with resources which can help lay this foundation.

1. Legal source

- Go over the Internal Revenue Service's rules for preaching politics from the pulpit. **(Slide 39 and Handout)**
- Tell the students ministers must know the law when it comes to what they can say from the pulpit even if they intend to disregard or disobey it. There are limits to protected speech from the pulpit.

2. Sources on how religion and politics work together. **(Slide 40)**

- Point out the sources within this category that deal with organizational or "movement" politics within the Church. Tell the student that these works attempt to address the role of religion and government from biblical, historical, or theoretical bases in light of present day political/religious happenings. **(Slide 41)**
- Emphasize to students It is a good discipline to expose oneself to the thinking of writers for and against such political uprisings that often begin as grassroots movements within the Church.

3. Sources that deal with specific policy issues. **(Slide 42)**

- Political Parties. Point out some specific policy positions of the 3 parties.

- Tell the students that in recent decades many Christian writers have focused their energies on making sure that readers understand the various social policies enacted or being proposed. They also include commentary on how Christians should think about and respond to such policies. Just as with secular sources these Christian sources reflect the theological persuasion, or bias, of the writer.

D. Analyzing the Contemporary Audience

- Begin by showing the slide. **(Slide 43)**
 - Ask students to identify any formal training they have received in analyzing their audience and culture? Ask them to name the steps they take in their sermon preparation?
1. Tell students to begin cultural analysis with the local congregation. **(Slide 44)**
 - Direct students to the Lenora Tubbs Tisdale material. **(Handouts)**
 1. Stories- “Indeed there are probably no more fruitful ‘texts’ for analyzing congregational subcultures than the narratives participants in congregational life share with the pastor in the ordinary process of carrying on ministry.”
 2. Interviews- “Interviews, whether formal or informal, conducted with individuals or with groups, can be culture texts, disclosive of congregational identity and social change.”
 3. Archival Materials- “While some congregations have more formal systems of filing and preserving archival materials than others, nearly every congregation has a box, cabinet, or file drawer that contains materials that have been deemed worthy of preservation, and that holds something of the memory of congregational life.”

4. Demographics- “While such statistics provide only a superficial description...they nevertheless do provide valuable information about congregational identity and how it is formed. A congregation’s worldview and character are shaped by who is or who isn’t included in congregational life.”
5. Architecture and visual art- “The quest is not simply descriptive. What deeper meanings can be gleaned about the particular worldview, character, and ethos of this congregation by observing the art and space of that building it calls ‘home’?”
6. Rituals- “Rituals not only provide sources for discovering what congregational identity is; they also provide opportunities to probe and explore what it is becoming.”
7. Events and Activities- “Theoretically, any event in congregational life has potential to become a ‘cultural text’- particularly those activities that hold special meaning and value for members of that congregation.
8. People- “In nearly every congregation there are respected figures who, in their very beings, symbolically personify the ideals of that congregation....By observing these sages, a student of congregational culture can learn much more about what a congregation values....Alternatively, there also exists in congregational life people who live ‘on the margins’. If attending to the sages can tell a pastor what is valued in a congregation, attending to those on the margins can give a signal as to where the cultural boundary lines lie that separates ‘us’ from ‘not us’”

(Chapter 3, Exegeting the Congregation, pp. 65 – 77).

- Use Tisdale material to analyze congregations worldview. **(Handout)**
- *If you were going to locate the congregations understanding of itself in relation to the larger culture, how would you characterize it? (Using H. Richard Niebuhr's categories in *Christ and Culture*, would this church's stance be characterized as 'against,' 'above,' 'of,' 'in paradox,' or 'transforming'?)*
- *Would the congregation's mission orientation best be characterized as:*
 - a. *activist* (with strong emphasis on the congregation's own corporate address of social, political, and economic issues),
 - b. *civic* (encouraging church groups to study public issues and encouraging individuals to become involved, while avoiding corporate stands as a church body),
 - c. *evangelistic* (with primary emphasis upon the call of individuals to salvation and eternal life), or
 - d. *sanctuary* (providing a place in which its participants can withdraw from the trials of societal life and find a safe haven)?
- *Would the congregation's own self-image for social ministry best be described as:*
 - a. *Survivor church* (reactive to the crises of an overwhelming world);
 - b. *Crusader church* (proactive in seeking out issues and championing causes);
 - c. *Pillar church* (anchor in its community and taking responsibility for the community's well-being);

d. Pilgrim church (caring for immigrants with ethnic, national, or racial roots)

e. Servant church (caring for and supporting individuals in need)?

- Present Haddon Robinson's approach for exegeting the congregation.

(Handout)

- Ask student to identify the benefits of using a life situation grid.

1. Analyze the culture at large.

- Give students resources available to help ministers with cultural analysis. **(Slide 45)**

2. The use of sermon surveys.

- Tell the students that surveys and feedback can be conducted formally and informally in a local congregation. Also, ministers can consult published, more in-depth, statistical surveys to gain understanding of congregant attitudes towards politics and social issues during the sermon.
- Discuss the finding of Dr. Lori Carrell- The Great American Sermon Survey. **(Slide 46 – 51)**
- Give students the assignment of using the sources mentioned in the above discussion to analyze the congregations they pastor or a congregation with which they are very familiar. They must relate in writing what their findings indicate about the political attitudes of the people to whom you preach?

- **Conclusion**

Chapter three has explored political preaching from its practical and technical aspects. A minister can have sound theology and homiletical license to focus sermons upon civil and social issues. If that is established firmly then strong consideration must be given to the sermon's development and the audience who will hear it. Therefore, this section has examined actual sermon development of a political sermon. It has reinforced the necessity of "Big Idea" preaching and the steps that go into formulating an effective political sermon. Second, this section mentioned some types of literature that a minister should reference when developing this kind of sermon. And, finally, this chapter focused upon audience analysis. It offered several ideas for exegeting not only the local congregation but the broader culture in order to attain awareness of the attitudes concerning religion and politics which might be present within the congregation. **(Slide 52)**

- (Take questions and administer feedback survey in Appendix)

CHAPTER FIVE

REPORT OF TEACHING SESSION

INTRODUCTION

According to the requirements for this course each student must teach some or all of the content from chapters one through three of his or her thesis-project. What follows then is a detailed report of the teaching session that took place for this project. In accordance with the guidance given, the paragraphs below will describe the session that was held, the feedback that was received from the group members, the instructor's own evaluation of the session, and suggestions for improving the teaching event. This teaching session took place on 10 June 2011 at the Camp Foster base chapel on Okinawa, Japan. This session lasted two hours from twelve o'clock to two o'clock in the afternoon with lunch provided for the participants. As stated, the teaching covered selected portions of chapters one through three of the thesis-project. Details will be given on the session materials later in this report.

GROUP SETTING

Twenty Christian, military chaplains and civilian ministers on the island of Okinawa, Japan were invited to attend this event. Of the Twenty invited, there were ten students who accepted the invitation. The membership of this group was made up of nine military chaplains and one civilian minister. While the military chaplain was the majority vocation represented within the group the faith groups of these individuals were varied and diverse. Two members were from the Methodist tradition, three were Pentecostal,

two were Episcopal, one was Presbyterian USA, one was from the Evangelical Covenant Church, and one from the Southern Baptist Convention. All of the group members were male and their ages ranged from late twenties to late forties. All of the members had seminary degrees and two members had earned a PHD in Systematic Theology. This diversity in faith group, education, and theological perspective made for rich and insightful discussions.

The occasion for this teaching event was arranged specifically for this thesis-project. There was no type of military chaplains' or ministers' conference or training available in order to incorporate this session. Instead, specific people were contacted by email, informed about the project and the teaching requirement, and asked to be a part of this session. As was stated above, the instructor provided lunch in an effort to create a sense of connectedness among the members. This session was designed to be informal with an emphasis on group discussion based upon the material presented. Time was a critical factor. Because of the operational tempo and scheduling demands, a two hour session was the maximum commitment the group members could make to this session.

In the preparation for teaching this course there were many considerations. Obviously, the most crucial decision for this session revolved around the selection of teaching material. There were two approaches considered for the teaching plan. The first approach involved isolating a portion of the thesis-project and teaching it as a stand-alone unit. The instructor's original idea was to teach the section of chapter three dealing with exegeting a congregation and culture. This section seemed the most relevant and practical instruction with application not only for political sermons but all preaching.

The other approach involved covering selected portions of all three chapters of the project. Wanting to make sure the participants had a thorough understanding of the project, it was determined that this approach allowed for the broadest exposure to the topic and allowed the members of the group to trace the thought processes of the project writer. Therefore, the second option was selected by the instructor as the best approach available.

The task of the instructor was to select material from each chapter which gave sufficient representation of the topic of political preaching and the supporting ideas. Originally, it was intended that this teaching session would briefly cover the theological and exegetical material in the chapters reserving the majority of the time for chapter three. In particular, the section on exegeting the local congregation and the culture at large was to receive major consideration both in teaching and discussing. However, given the time constraints and the necessity of orienting the group to the subject matter, each chapter was given equal treatment paring them down to only essential information while reserving adequate time for group responses. Including the introduction, each chapter was covered in fifteen to twenty minutes. As will be seen below in both the student feedback and in the instructor's evaluation this approach was shortsighted and incomplete for the time allotted and the group's desire to discuss the material.

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT'S FEEDBACK

For the instructor, the most important aspect of the class was the responses and opinions of the participants concerning the materials and class presentation. The feedback from the group members was obtained through a survey administered at the end of the

teaching session to all attending group members. The two page feedback instrument was simple in its design. No participant appeared unsure as to how to complete it. The first page contained eleven questions to which participants answered according to frequency of occurrence. These questions revolved around the instructor's teaching performance during the session. The scale for these questions was one through seven with one representing "Never" and seven representing "Frequently". For example question number one states, "The instructor clearly indicated where the class was going?" The student circled a number on the scale between one and seven that represented how frequently the instructor accomplished this teaching task.

The second page asked for written responses to four questions. These questions were open-ended and somewhat broad in order to give the students the greatest possible latitude in expressing themselves. The questions revolved around what the students thought were the positive and negative aspects of the class and changes they would make to the class, curriculum, or presentation. The participants were encouraged to write as much as they wished in order to make future teaching sessions more profitable and conducive to a genuine learning experience.

In regards to specific feedback, the surveys were very encouraging for the instructor. From observation, it appeared that the participants took time and care in reading and answering each question. On the first page of the survey the cumulative average score among the participants was six. This implies that overall the participants felt that the instructor frequently and effectively performed those actions which are essential to teaching the material and, to learning. The eleven statements were as follows:

1. The instructor clearly indicated where the class was going
2. The materials were clearly explained

The instructor...

3. indicated important points to remember
4. showed genuine interest in students
5. effectively directed and stimulated discussion
6. Explained thinking behind statements
7. Effectively encouraged students to ask questions and give answers
8. 'Adjusted pace of class to the students' level of understanding
9. Seemed well-prepared
10. Stimulated interest in the material
11. Is effective, overall, in helping me learn.

While the average score was six, some participants wrote notes in the margin of the survey as a way of qualifying their answers. For instance, for questions five through seven one participant wrote, "for amount of time available". Had more time been allotted perhaps his answer would have changed. Another student wrote, "Great Job!" on the bottom of his survey.

On page two the written response questions were as follows:

1. What did you like best about the course?
2. What would you like to change about the course?
3. What suggestions would you give to improve this instructor's teaching?
4. What key point(s) were most valuable to you today?

Eight of the ten participants provided written feedback to the questions while two participants provided no written response to any question. The blank page could be due to the thought that there was not enough time to complete the entire survey. The specific feedback received was very positive.

What follows is some of the more noteworthy responses. For question 1, one comment said, "Excellent topic and presentation. This was a great opportunity to bring

this subject to this audience”. Also, this participant said on question 4 that the key point for him was “the aspects of biblical preaching”. Another student stated that defining certain terms like “politics” and “morality” would strengthen the material. This student thought the interaction between students was the best thing about the class. One student responded to question 3 by saying, “Be confident in your material...it is good”. All the participants remarked on how much they appreciated the course emphasis upon expository preaching.

THE INSTRUCTOR’S EVALUATION

While the participants’ responses were very generous and positive, the instructor sees some deficiencies in his presentation. On the positive side the instructor was able to foster a sense of collegiality among the members. His efforts were aided by the fact that most of the group members knew each other before the class. Also, the instructor did convey to the students the precise topic and the intended direction for the class. They did understand that the topic of the class was how to preach political sermons ethically and effectively. Enthusiasm and a sense of urgency for the topic were definitely communicated to those in the group. Likewise, the instructor found it very easy to stimulate and prompt group discussion. This is due to the fact that preaching is a passion for all who attended the session. It was apparent that all the members want to become better preachers and communicators. Also, the instructor was well-prepared. Working on and living with the material for three years gave a thorough knowledge of the course content and an understanding of how it should flow. Finally, the instructor clearly

explained the material to the students. The power points, handouts, and lecture aided the participants in understanding the content of the material taught.

On the negative side there were some glaring shortcomings that must be corrected in order to strengthen the presentation. The first one is that the instructor did a poor job in differentiating the material. The idea of teaching all the material in a relatively short time span, while good in theory, was impractical. This fact was really the underlying cause of all the other deficiencies. Not differentiating the material made it difficult to single out key points and bits of information for participants to remember. Also, this meant we could not stay on any section or point for very long. Also, adjusting the pace of the class was lost. It seemed as if after the forty-five minute mark there ensued a rush to get all the material covered. The most noted comment on their surveys concerned the lack of time. It was apparent that the students wanted to discuss the material more. However, because of their education and experience level they were able, more or less, to put together the pieces that were hurriedly addressed.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

As was mentioned above, the group participants gave insightful comments which, when implemented will result in positive dividends for both student and instructor. From the instructor's view and from the above paragraphs improvements will come in the following five areas:

1. The course must be taught in a formal setting like a conference or minister's gathering to get the best results. To try and do this on an informal basis really takes some of the punch away from the process. If this is attempted on an

informal basis then care should be given to who is invited. It would have been a better experience had more civilian clergy and women been invited. Diversity is a plus when teaching a course on this topic.

2. In order to teach the material enough time has to be allotted. To adequately cover the material selected three hours was needed. This relieves the need to rush through the material and will not put the instructor or the group at the mercy of the clock.
3. For a class session which is two hours or less the instructor should be content with teaching less material. This means the instructor has to work hard at honing and crafting the session so that only the most salient points are addressed and discussed. The practical helps in chapter three were what the instructor most wanted to give to the participants for this session. However, that was lost amid all the other material he tried to cover. It is better to give a short introduction to the course and then begin with chapter three rather than the method used for this session.
4. The instructor should seek a balanced approach between lecture and discussion. This is imperative to establish before teaching the course. This will also aid the instructor in determining how much material can be presented. In hindsight, a balance of fifty percent lecture and fifty percent discussion is of greater value than what actually happened in this session.
5. The instructor needs to do a better job of defining and explaining “big idea” preaching. Again, this is partly due to the time constraints; however, if this material is included in the session, the concept of the big idea needs to be firmly

grasped by the participants since it is the key method for constructing a political sermon. When this is done properly it reinforces the idea that expository preaching and the truth of the Word must remain the centerpiece.

CONCLUSION

The task of writing and teaching this thesis-project has been very formative and informative. It has been formative from the standpoint that many of my previously held views about preaching political sermons were challenged and, a few of those views were changed. This assignment has made me more appreciative of the task of preaching and has produced greater dedication to exegeting scripture correctly. Also, this assignment has been informative in that I now know the intricacies involved in writing and teaching. This project has shown me how to take an idea and produce a finished, written product that can be taught to others. This experience will produce professional and personal benefits for the rest of my life. I have and, will continue, to recommend this course of study to every minister who wants to grow as a preacher.

APPENDIX A

MATTHEW 5: 13 – 16 WORKSHEET

Purpose:

Structure:

Historical Context:

Verse by Verse:

Application:

Implications for Preaching Politics:

APPENDIX B

MATTHEW 22: 15 – 22 WORKSHEET

Theme and Structure:

Verse by Verse:

Implications for Political Preaching

APPENDIX C

ROMANS 13: 1 – 6 WORKSHEET

Purpose:

Structure:

Context:

Verse by Verse:

Interpretations:

Implications for Political Preaching:

APPENDIX D

THREE APPROACHES TO PREACHING POLITICS

Table 1

Three Approaches to Preaching Politics

Party-political Approach (Partisan)	Biblical-political Approach (ethical/biblical worldview)	Apolitical Approach (pietistic)
Takes frequent breaks away from consecutive exposition in order to “preach” on historical-socio-political themes.	Maintains a regular diet of consecutive exposition.	Maintains a regular diet of “Gospel texts” or an apractical focus upon Christ (redemptive-historical preaching).
More topical sermons (e.g., roots of America, how evolution came to be taught in schools).	Expository sermons that reference burning contemporary issues as and when demanded by the text or passage of Scripture in view.	Curtails application of the preaching to the gospel (narrowly understood), issues of sanctification, and evangelism.
Typically assumes a political-party perspective- more than not Republican in Euro-American congregations and Democratic in Afro-American or Hispanic congregations.	Allows the Word to speak for itself, both in terms of the range of issues addressed and the manner in which they are touched on. Sometimes the Word favors one party perspective, sometimes another; perhaps both parties; sometimes neither.	Typically makes application of the Word to but a narrow range of spiritual issues.
Often inspires partisan or party-political action.	Ought to inspire a range of ecclesial, evangelistic and socio-political activities, the motivation behind which is the biblical worldview.	Tends to be silent about political action, party-political or otherwise.

APPENDIX E

THE PREACHER AND THE IRS

1. Pastors may personally endorse a candidate. ...The IRS explicitly states that, while a pastor may endorse or oppose a candidate in the parking lot of the church or the local grocery store in conversation, he or she may not directly endorse or oppose a candidate from the pulpit.
2. Pastors may also personally work for a candidate and contribute to his or her campaign.
3. Pastors may even endorse a candidate in print, such as in a newspaper advertisement. The pastor's title and church s/he affiliated with may also be listed for the purposes of identification.
4. Pastors may also preach on moral and social issues (abortion, gay marriage, economic matters, etc.) which, depending on the pastor's views, may by implication throw support behind one candidate over another.
5. Churches may organize voter registrations and drives as long as they are directed at all eligible voters and not only toward voters of one political party.
6. Churches may hold forums where candidates address the issues.
7. If a candidate visits a church during worship, he or she may be introduced publicly.
8. Churches may host candidates to speak from the pulpit, as long as that candidate is not directly endorsed or urges the congregation to vote for him/her.
9. Churches may distribute non-partisan voter guides giving information on where each candidate stands on the issues.
10. Churches may use their premises as voting stations. (pp. 1 – 2)

APPENDIX F

FIELDS OF OBSERVATION

1. **stories-** “Indeed there are probably no more fruitful ‘texts’ for analyzing congregational subcultures than the narratives participants in congregational life share with the pastor in the ordinary process of carrying on ministry.”
2. **Interviews-** “Interviews, whether formal or informal, conducted with individuals or with groups, can be culture texts, disclosive of congregational identity and social change.”
3. **Archival Materials-** “While some congregations have more formal systems of filing and preserving archival materials than others, nearly every congregation has a box, cabinet, or file drawer that contains materials that have been deemed worthy of preservation, and that holds something of the memory of congregational life.”
4. **Demographics-** “While such statistics provide only a superficial description...they nevertheless do provide valuable information about congregational identity and how it is formed. A congregation’s worldview and character are shaped by who is or who isn’t included in congregational life.”
5. **Architecture and visual art-** “The quest is not simply descriptive. What deeper meanings can be gleaned about the particular worldview, character, and ethos of this congregation by observing the art and space of that building it calls ‘home’?”
6. **Rituals-** “Rituals not only provide sources for discovering what congregational identity is; they also provide opportunities to probe and explore what it is becoming.”
7. **Events and Activities-** “Theoretically, any event in congregational life has potential to become a ‘cultural text’- particularly those activities that hold special meaning and value for members of that congregation.
8. **People-** “In nearly every congregation there are respected figures who, in their very beings, symbolically personify the ideals of that congregation....By observing these sages, a student of congregational culture can learn much more about what a congregation values....Alternatively, there also exists in congregational life people who live ‘on the margins’. If attending to the sages can tell a pastor what is valued in a congregation, attending to those on the margins can give a signal as to where the cultural boundary lines lie that separates ‘us’ from ‘not us’”



APPENDIX G

QUESTIONS FOR EXEGETING THE CONGREGATION

- *If you were going to locate the congregations understanding of itself in relation to the larger culture, how would you characterize it? (Using H. Richard Niebuhr's categories in *Christ and Culture*, would this church's stance be characterized as 'against,' 'above,' 'of,' 'in paradox,' or 'transforming'?)*
- *Would the congregation's mission orientation best be characterized as:*
 - a. *activist* (with strong emphasis on the congregation's own corporate address of social, political, and economic issues),
 - b. *civic* (encouraging church groups to study public issues and encouraging individuals to become involved, while avoiding corporate stands as a church body),
 - c. *evangelistic* (with primary emphasis upon the call of individuals to salvation and eternal life), or
 - d. *sanctuary* (providing a place in which its participants can withdraw from the trials of societal life and find a safe haven)?
- *Would the congregation's own self-image for social ministry best be described as:*
 - a. *Survivor church* (reactive to the crises of an overwhelming world);
 - b. *Crusader church* (proactive in seeking out issues and championing causes);
 - c. *Pillar church* (anchor in its community and taking responsibility for the community's well-being);
 - d. *Pilgrim church* (caring for immigrants with ethnic, national, or racial roots)
 - e. *Servant church* (caring for and supporting individuals in need)? (View of Christian Mission, p. 84)

APPENDIX H

LIFE SITUATION GRID

<div>   </div>		SITUATION				
		MALE	FEMALE	SINGLE	DIVORCED	LIVING TOGETHER
AGE	TEEN					
	YOUNG ADULT					
	30 SOMETHING					
	MIDDLE-AGE					
	RETIRED					
	ELDERLY					

APPENDIX I

REVIEW OF *CHRIST AND CULTURE*

In 1949 Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary invited theologian and ethicist H. Richard Niebuhr to deliver a series of lectures dealing with the topic of how the Christian Church is to relate to culture. From those lectures came the book entitled *Christ and Culture*. In the more than fifty years since its writing it has become not only a classic resource but the dominant source to help inform Christians as to how to live for the Lord while living in society. John G. Stackhouse observes, “Like those of other persuasions, evangelicals have often used Niebuhr’s book as a point of departure to define how we should – and should not – interact with contemporary culture.” (Christianity Today, April 22, 2002, p.1)

This book defines a problem and presents for readers 5 approaches in viewing Christ and Culture. First, Niebuhr presents what he calls the “enduring problem”. For Niebuhr (1951) the enduring problem is the relationship between Christianity and civilization. He states in chapter one the following:

A many-sided debate about the relations of Christianity and civilization is being carried on in our time. Historians and theologians, statesmen and churchmen, Catholics and Protestants, Christians and anti-Christians participate in it. It is carried on publicly by opposing parties and privately in the conflicts of conscience. (p. 1)

He also says, “Not only pagans who have rejected Christ but believers who have accepted him find it difficult to combine his claims upon them with those of their societies” (p. 10).

In light of this problem Niebuhr posits five types of relationships Christianity can have with culture. Peter Gathje (2002) writes,

Niebuhr leads readers through the vastness of Christian history and theology by sketching five types that are compared in terms of consistency of theology and practice. Drawing on various representative people or churches, Niebuhr examines each type's approach to Christology, reason and revelation, evil and sin, law and love, church and state, and views of history. (*The Christian Century*, p. 26)

According to Niebuhr the first and the last type in his five approaches represent the two extremes. The first approach to Christianity and culture is what he labels "Christ Against Culture". Niebuhr says of this position that it "is the one that uncompromisingly affirms the sole authority of Christ over the Christian and resolutely rejects culture's claims to loyalty" (p. 45). He later notes, "...a clear line of separation is drawn between the brotherhood of the children of God and the world" (p. 47 – 48). Niebuhr examines biblical passages used for this position's justification as well as presenting proponents such as Saint Augustine and Tolstoy.

Niebuhr believes that this position should not be dismissed as the rantings of "half-baked and muddle-headed men" He does see commendable and positive characteristics in this position. One such characteristic is the single-minded dedication to their belief. He writes,

Yet the singleheartedness and sincerity of the representatives of this type are among the most attractive qualities. They have not taken the easy way in professing their allegiance to Christ These Christian withdrawals and the

rejection of the institutions of society have been of very great importance to both Christ and culture. They have maintained the distinction between Christ and Caesar, between revelation and reason, between God's will and man's. (p. 66)

Niebuhr's treatment of this approach also identifies some negative characteristic which make this extreme approach untenable for many Christians. First, he sees the strict distinction between reason and revelation as made by proponents of this type as a false dichotomy. He observes, "They cannot solve their problem of Christ and culture without recognizing that distinctions must be made both with respect that goes on outside the Christian sphere and to the knowledge that is present in it" (p.78). Second, he believes that this position is misleading as to its view of sin. For Niebuhr, it is not culture that is sinful but man. It is because of the fact that sin reside in the heart which makes withdrawal from culture an insufficient remedy. Third, and the most significant problem for Neibuhr is how this type minimizes Christ and the Spirit's role in creation. He writes, "the knottiest problem raised by the Christ against-culture movement is the problem of the relation of Jesus Christ to the Creator of nature and Governor of history as well as to the Spirit immanent in creation and in the Christian community" (p. 80). Niebuhr's final thought is that the church needs other approaches as a counterbalance to this type of Christianity.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the extreme type Niebuhr calls *Christ of Culture*. This approach is an accommodation of both culture and Christianity. Of this type Niebuhr states,

These men are Christians not only in the sense that they count themselves believers in the Lord but also in the sense that they seek to maintain community with all other believers. Yet they seem equally at home in the community of culture. They feel no great tension between church and world, the social law and the Gospel, the workings of divine grace and human effort, the ethics of salvation and the ethics of social conversation or progress. On the one hand they interpret culture through Christ... on the other hand they understand Christ through culture. (p. 83)

According to Niebuhr, a positive aspect of this type is it has extended the reign of Christ over the lives of men. He points out that

Though the aim of many Christians who interpret Christ as the Messiah of a culture is the salvation or reform of that culture rather than the extension of Christ's power, they contribute greatly to the latter by helping men to understand his gospel in their own language, his character by their own imagery, and his revelation by means of their own philosophy. (p. 103)

Niebuhr sees this type's most crucial drawback as being the distortion of the historical/biblical Christ. He points out, "the Christ of culture problem shows a consistent tendency to distort the figure of the New Testament Jesus. In their effort at accommodation, cultural Protestants find it strangely desirable to write apocryphal gospels and new lives of Jesus (p. 108).

At this point Niebuhr identifies three median types. While the two extreme types focus exclusively on one world (either the Kingdom of God as seen in Christ or culture) the median types see truth in both Christ and culture. They are willing to live

with the inevitable tension produced by these two entities rather than eliminate one for the sake of harmony. While this is common to all median types there are significant differences to readily distinguish one from the others.

The first median type is *Christ Above Culture*. Niebuhr says,

The great majority movement in Christianity, which we may call the church of the center, has refused to take either the position of the anticultural radicals or that of the accommodators of Christ to culture. Yet, it has not regarded its effort at solution of the Christ-culture problem as compromise. For it the fundamental issue does not lie between Christ and the world, as important as that issue is, but between God and man. (p. 117)

Niebuhr highlights what is possibly the chief characteristic of this type- God's grace active within culture. He claims of this movement,

They cannot separate the works of human culture from the grace of God, for all those works are possible only by grace. Neither can they separate the experience of grace from cultural activity; for how can men love the unseen God in response to His love without serving the visible brother in human society? (p. 119)

A positive feature of this type is found in the synthesist quest for unity of Christ and culture. This effort makes it possible to see the institutions and organizations as means of God's grace rather than godless, human creations.

Man's search for unity is unconquerable, and the Christian has a special reason for seeking integrity because of his fundamental faith in the God who is One. When he has realized, in consequence of experience and reflection,

that he cannot be one with himself if he denies nature and culture in the effort to be obedient to Christ, or that such denial itself involves a kind of disobedience to the commandment of love, since the social institutions are instruments of that love, then he must seek some sort of reconciliation between Christ and culture without denial of either. (p. 141)

A concern for Niebuhr with this type is that despite its efforts to synthesize Christ and Culture because both contain divine values inevitably, one is always emphasized over the other. Usually culture, in its present form, becomes the focus of these Christians. This brings with it a temptation to compromise the gospel message. Christ becomes a figure justifying the existence and divine authorization of institutions and political infrastructures rather than the central figure of our holiness.

Another median view is *Christ in Paradox*. Niebuhr labels those of this approach dualists because of the fact that this approach emphasizes and holds in tension both the righteousness of God and the sinfulness of man. For them Christ and culture cannot be dealt with apart from the act of grace from God as demonstrated in Christ on the cross. Niebuhr explains,

No matter what the dualist's psychological history may have been, his logical starting point in dealing with the cultural problem is the great act of reconciliation and forgiveness that has occurred in the divine-humans battle-the act we call Jesus Christ. From this beginning the fact that there was and is a conflict, the facts of God's grace and human sin are understood. (p. 130)

On a positive note, Niebuhr expresses well the conflict that is continually presence within Christians who sincerely desire to be loyal to Christ while at the same

time living and participating in culture. The benefit of this approach is it does not forfeit one to ensure the dominance of the other. Instead, it recognizes the reality and influence of both. Niebuhr states it like this:

The dualist knows that he belongs to that culture and cannot get out of it, that God indeed sustains him in it and by it; for if God in His grace did not sustain the world in its sin it would not exist for a moment. (p. 156)

Negatively, Niebuhr sees two weaknesses of this type. One, it can lead to antinomianism. He says, "The relativization of all the laws of society, of reason, of all other works of men...has doubtlessly given occasion to the light-minded or the despairing to cast aside the rules of civilized living" (p. 187). And, two, this type can lead to a cultural conservatism whereby the fallen civil and political infrastructures of society are preserved. Of this position, he writes,

Conservatism is a logical consequence of the tendency to think of law, state, and other institutions as restraining forces, dykes against sin, preventers of anarchy, rather than as positive agencies through which men in social union render positive service to neighbors advancing toward true life. (p. 188)

The final type is what is called, *Christ the Transformer of Culture*. These Christians are known as the conversionists of culture. Niebuhr notes three theological convictions held by this type which distinguishes it from the others. First, it has a particular view of creation. He observes, "For the conversionist, however, the creative activity of God and of Christ-in-God is a major theme, neither overpowered by nor overpowering the idea of atonement" (p. 192).

Second, this type has a conviction about man's fall and its consequences in the world. This type sees that man's fall resulted in the corruption of his nature. All that he is and does is bent away from God. Niebuhr illustrates this by pointing out,

He loves with the love that is given him in his creation, but love beings wrongly, in the wrong order; he desires good with the desire given him by his Maker, but aims at goods that are not good for him and misses his true good; he produces fruit but it is misshapen and bitter; he organizes society with the aid of his practical reason, but works against the grain of things in self-willed forcing of his reason into irrational paths, and thus disorganizes things in his very acts of organization. (p.194)

The first two convictions work together to bring about the conversionist's third conviction. This is the conviction about history and God's work within it. The conversionist sees that history not so much as past events but as God interacting with man in the here-and-now. For Niebuhr, this view of history explains the transforming activity of God upon culture. Niebuhr says,

The conversionist with his view of history as present encounter with God in Christ, does not live so much in expectation of a final ending of the world of creation and culture as in awareness of the power of the Lord to transform all things by lifting them up to himself. (p. 195)

By implication, if God is transforming society then far from escaping it we should remain and work within it as instruments of God's transforming grace.

For the purposes of this project, stating Niebuhr's final conclusion on the matter is not necessary. However, to provide some closure, Niebuhr rests the matter

of loyalty to Christ while living in culture with individual believers and communities. He presents to the reader the idea that each individual and community must move from knowledge to understanding, from understanding to decision, and from decision to action all with dependence upon the grace of God which makes transformation possible. Speaking of making decisions concerning Christ and culture Niebuhr finishes his book by stating,

It is to make them in view of the fact that Christ is risen from the dead, and is not only head of the church but redeemer of the world. It is to make them in view of the fact that the world of culture- man's achievement- exists within the world of grace- God's kingdom. (p. 256)

APPENDIX J

FEEDBACK SURVEY

Course: _____

Instructor Name: _____

1 = disagree; 7 = agree

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1 The instructor clearly indicated where the class was going | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 2 The materials were clearly explained | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 3 Indicated important points to remember | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 4 Showed genuine interest in students | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 5 Effectively directed and stimulated discussion | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 6 Explained thinking behind statements | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 7 Effectively encouraged students to ask questions and give answers | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 8 Adjusted pace of class to the students' level of understanding | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 9 Seemed well-prepared | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 10 Stimulates interest in material | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 11 Is effective, overall, in helping me learn | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 12 Goals were clear | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 13 We achieved the goals that were stated | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |

What was most helpful about the course?

What would you like to change about the course?

What suggestions would you give to improve this instructor's teaching?

What key point(s) were most valuable for you today?

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VITA

Dennis K. Andrews

CREDO Navy Southeast Region
Naval Air Station
Building 751 Birmingham Avenue, Suite 6
Jacksonville, Florida 32212
(904) 542-4914
Email: dennis.k.andrews@navy.mil

425 Crescent Pond Drive
Saint Johns, Florida 32259
(904) 637-2649

PERSONAL HISTORY

BORN: March 25, 1962
Shelby, North Carolina

EDUCATION

DMIN	Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary South Hamilton, Massachusetts	2006 - Present (Expected graduation May 2012)
M.DIV	Asbury Theological Seminary Wilmore, Kentucky	1987 – 1990
B.A.	High Point University, High Point, North Carolina English (Film Studies Focus)	1983 - 1985
	Southern Wesleyan University, Central, South Carolina	1981 - 1983